GRAND WAR STORY BEGINS TO-DAY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 475. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 5TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 475.] For the Week ending February 5th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

A New Serial Story] [***Starts to-day.***

THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATIONS AND A MAN.

As all the world knows, the Children's Ball of the Lady Mayoress takes place yearly on the night of "Twelfth Day," January 6th, at the Mansion House. In the year '98 the function was even more successful than usual, owing to Sir Henry Burdett's fine idea that the children in their fancy dresses should be photographed in support of the Prince of Wales' Hospital Fund. The little Walter Raleighs, the tiny Amy Robsarts, and the white-robed angels in miniature, flocked in gaudy throngs to the specially-fitted-up photographer's studio adjoining the grand *salon* of the Mansion House; while all that wide space outside between the Mansion House, the Bank, and the Stock Exchange was a mere mass of waiting, arriving, and departing vehicles.

If anything tended to take a little of their exuberance from this and other New Year jubilations (so far as the older heads were concerned, at least), it was a certain cloudiness in the political sky; nothing very definite, nothing terrifying; yet something so real, that nearly everyone felt it with disquiet. An Irish member, celebrated for his "bulls," was heard to say: "Take my word for it, there's going to be a sun-set in the East." Men strolled into their clubs, and said, with or without a yawn: "Is there going to be a row, then?" Someone might answer: "Not a bit of it; it'll pass off presently, you'll see." But another would be sure to add: "Things are looking black enough, all the same."

It was just as when, on a clear day at sea, low and jagged edges of disconnected clouds appear inkily on the horizon-edge, and no one is quite certain whether or not they will meet, and whelm the sky, and sink the ship.

But the horizon had hardly darkened, when again it cleared. The principal cause of fear had been what had looked uncommonly like a conspiracy of the three great Continental Powers to act in concert in ousting England from her predominance in the East. First there was the seizure of Kiao-chau, and the bombastic farewells of the two German Royal brothers; then immediately the aggressive attitude of Russia at Port Arthur, and her demand that a Russian should take the place of Mr. MacLeavy Brown as Controller of the Corean Finances; then immediately the startling rumour that France had seized Hainan, was sending an expedition to exploit Yun-nan, and had two ships of the line in Hoi-How harbour.

All this had decidedly the look of concert between the Powers concerned; for within the last few years it had got to be more and more clearly recognised by the British public that centuries of neighbourhood on the Continent had fostered among the Continental nations a certain spirit of kinship, in which the Island-Kingdom was no sharer.

In the course of years the Straits of Dover had widened into an ocean. Europe had receded from Britain, and Britain, in her pride, had drawn back from Europe. From the curl of the moustache, to the colour and cut of the evening-dress, to the manner in which women held up their skirts, there was similarity between French and German, between German and Russian and Austrian, and dissimilarity between all these and English.

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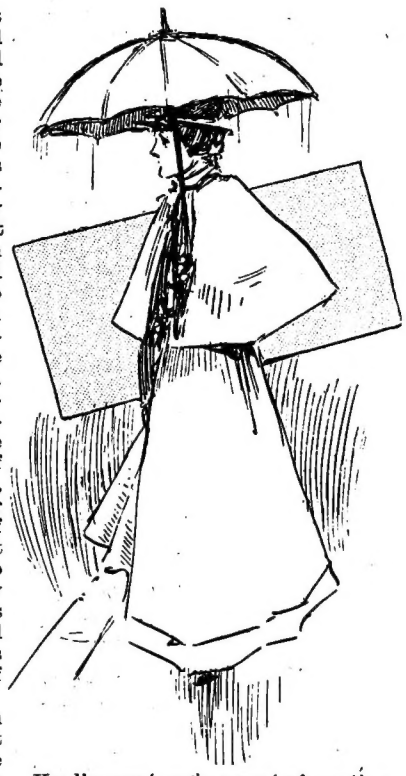
It is true that the Russian hated the German, and the German the Russian and the French; but their hatred was the hatred of brothers of the same family, always ready to combine against the outsider in case of need. All this had begun to be suspected, then definitely recognised, by the British nation. Alone and friendless must England tread the wine-press of modern history, solitary in her majesty; and if ever an attempt were made to stop her stately progress, she was prepared to find that her foe was the rest of Europe.



Her lips went up in a pout of vexation.

But very soon after the unrest caused by the activities of the three nations in China had arisen, it began to subside. France denied the annexation of Hainan; the semi-official *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, inspired by Wilhelm, painted Germany as the patron of peaceful commerce, with an amiable weakness for theatrical displays; Russia was defeated in the matter of the removal of Mr. MacLeavy Brown, and seemed sufficiently limp after it; while the spirits of everyone were raised by the probable guarantee of a Chinese loan of sixteen millions by the British Government—a step certain to secure the unchallenged predominance of England in the commerce and politics of China.

But, meanwhile, at the children's fancy ball at the Mansion House on the night of the 6th of January, events were working in a quite different direction to that of peaceful settlement.

Ada Seward was the presiding deity in the nursery of Mrs. Pattison, of Fulham. On the night of the 6th, Dr. and Mrs. Pattison had to be present at a ball in the West-end, and Ada on that night was busy; for it was necessary for her, first of all to convey Master Johnnie Pattison, costumed as Francis I., to the Mansion House; and then to hurry homeward again to take Miss Nellie Pattison to a children's evening with charades in South Kensington.

The fact that it was wet when she reached the Mansion House may have had something to do with her after troubles. The landing-place was occupied by some other carriages, and dismounting with her charge, with an umbrella over him, she cried to the coachman in a hurried and indistinct manner through the drizzle:

"Wait till I come back."

The man afterwards declared that he understood her to say:

"Go away, and come back."

At any rate, when Ada again came forth into the crush of the carriages to look for the Pattison brougham, it was nowhere to be found.

And now her lips went up in a pout of vexation. "What on earth is anyone to do now?" she said. She was pressed for time, and yet at a loss.

The throng of private carriages seemed to have banished all cabs from the region of the Mansion House. She looked, and saw none; then she looked into her pocket, and found only sixpence. These two circumstances decided her against the cab. Instead, she ran a few yards, dodging among the carriages, and at the entrance to Poultry, skipped into a moving 'bus.

She sat in a corner for about five minutes, with agonised glances out of the door at the slowly receding clocks. Then someone—a man sitting nearly opposite, whom she had not noticed—addressed her:

"Why, Miss Ada, is that you?"

"Oh!" she cried, "Mr. Brabant, is that you? It's a long time since—how are you?"

"Well, I'm pretty fair, Miss Ada, as times go, you know. Hope you are the same."

"Still in the army?"

"Oh, yes—the 23rd, as ever. B Company, you know. You living in London now?"

"Yes—at Fulham."

Here conversation flagged; and in that minute's interval, Brabant, with a sudden half-turn to his left, said:

"Just allow me to introduce you to my friend here—Miss Seward—Dr. Yen How."

In the light of the 'bus lamp Ada Seward saw a very small man, dressed in European clothes, yet a man whom she at once took to be Chinese. With a wrinkled grin, he put out his hand and shook hers.

He was a man of remarkable visage. When his hat was off one saw that he was nearly bald, and that his expanse of brow was simply majestic. There was something brooding, meditative, in the meaning of his long and narrow eyes, and there was a brown, and dark, and specially dirty shade in the yellow tan of his skin.

He was not really a Chinaman—or rather, he was that, and more. He was the son of a Japanese father by a Chinese woman. He combined these antagonistic races in one man. In Dr. Yen How was the East.

He was of noble feudal descent, and at Tokio, but for his Chinese blood, would have been styled Count. Not that the admixture of blood was very visible in his appearance; in China he passed for a Chinese, and in Japan for a Jap.

If ever man was cosmopolitan, that man was Dr. Yen How. No European could be more familiar with the *minutiæ* of Western civilisation. His degree of doctor he had obtained at the University of Heidelberg; for years he had practised as a specialist in the diseases of women and children at San Francisco.

He possessed an income of a thousand *tael* (about £300) from a tea-farm; but his life had been passed in the practice of the grinding industry of a slave. Nothing equalled his assiduity, his minuteness, his attention to detail. He had once written to the Royal Observatory at the Cape pointing out a trifling error in a long logarithmic calculation of the declension of one of the moons of Jupiter, originating from the observatory.

In the East he could have climbed at once, almost without effort, to the very top of the tree—even in the West he might have done it, had he chosen. But he chose to lie low, remaining unnoticed, studying, observing, making of himself an epitome of the West, as he was an embodiment of the East.

In whatever country he happened to be—and he was never for very many years in any one—he was most often to be found in the company of people of the lower classes, and of these he had a very intimate knowledge. So great was his mental breadth, that he was unable to sympathise in the least with either Eastern or Western distinctions of class and rank. He often struck up chance friendships with soldiers and sailors about the capitals of Europe; and these patronised and exhibited him here and there.

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Yen How knew that he was being patronised, and submitted to it—and smiled meekly.

He had two great defects—his shortness of sight, which caused him to wear rather big-lensed spectacles; and his inability, in speaking without effort, to pronounce the word "little." He still called it "lillee."

On the date of January 6th, when he drove westward in the 'bus with Brabant and Ada Seward, he was perhaps forty years of age, but he might have been anything, to judge from his appearance, between sixteen and sixty; a hard, omniscient, cosmopolitan little bundle of a man, tough as oak, dry as chips.

Yet in that head were leavening some big thoughts, and his heart was capable of tremendous passions.

In reality, could one have known it, as he fared onward through the fog and drizzle in the trundling and homely 'bus, smiling behind his big spectacles, he was the most important personage in London, or perhaps in the world.

Dr. Yen How was capable of anything. In him was the stoic, and the cynic, and the tiger; with a turn of the mind he could become a *savant*, or a statesman, or a crossing-sweeper, or a general. He possessed this excellence: a clear brain.

By one of those extraordinary freaks of nature for which there is no accounting, this strange man wanted to see Ada Seward a second time after parting with her that night. Brabant, who had known her formerly in her native town of Cheltenham, accompanied her to the gate of the Pattison villa, Yen How with them.

As he was leaving her, the little doctor put his mouth close to her ear, and whispered hurriedly:

"I will wait here to-morrow night at eight for *one lillee kiss*."

The girl was astounded.

"Well, the idea!" she just gasped.

Before she could definitely proclaim her indignation, the two men had turned off.

Till he reached his home in Portland Street that night, Yen How was engaged in one long, continuous, secret smile—a smile at his own expense. This outburst of his in the *rôle* of lover was new to him, absolutely. His whole relations with women hitherto had consisted in the business of curing their sicknesses. By what subtle physiological or psychological affinity this one particular English girl had been able to evoke from this particular dry Chino-Japanese a request for "one lillee kiss," he was utterly unable to divine. Such an affinity there undoubtedly was, but its origin lay among reasons far too abstruse for the unravelling of Yen, or of anyone else in fact.

Yen How smiled that first night, but he presently found that this was no smiling matter.

At eight the next evening he was duly at the Pattison gate, but, alas, no Ada was to be seen. Ada, however, was there, though invisible. She, with the Pattison cook, whom she had brought out to enjoy the fun, was hiding behind a shrubbery, and, peering through, shaking with laughter at the futile waiting of the little doctor.

And now Yen How, for the first time in his life, began to suffer on account of a woman.

He loved; and in his love was the concentrated passion of a thousand other men. Melted rock is lava—and he suffered.

He used to hang about the house for hours, day after day, waiting. To his patience there was no end—to his resolution to possess her, by fair means or foul, no end. That one face, by day, by night, was "always before his eyes"—so the old knights used to say when they loved princesses far above them. But Yen How's love was a British nursemaid, and his torment was very much more real and intense than that of any of the verse-writing troubadours.

Even in the matter of love the Eastern is essentially different from the Western. It is impossible for us, in anything, to understand them fully, so utterly foreign are they. With us love is frequent, and is merely a powerful mood; with them, when it rarely happens to seize them, the whole nature of the man is involved, and love becomes a passion having all the characteristics of ordinary flame.

One day, as he lurked about, he met her in the street returning from some shopping. By this time Yen How had become a standing joke for Ada in the kitchen and the servants'-bedroom. He walked up to her.

"Ah," he said with sideward head, and a cajoling smile, "you are here, then? You will give poor Yen How one lillee kiss?"

The whole idea of courtship possessed by this clownish and unpractised lover consisted in asking for one little kiss. Ada Seward's views of the matter were more elaborate. She despised his strong simplicity.

He was duly at the Pattison gate.

"Perhaps you are not aware who it is you are talking to," she said with dignity.

Yen was aware; he could have shut his eyes and drawn an exact picture of her face.

"Ah!" he said; "not even one lillee——"

"I'll give you one lillee box of soap to wash your face, if you like!" she cried, running and looking back. The house was near; he could not overtake her.

Perhaps it would have been impossible for Miss Seward to utter any set of words more calculated to drive Yen to madness than this heartless reference to "soap." If his suit was hopeless, it was now borne in upon him that it was hopeless on account of his race. The girl did not listen to him, and then reject him; she rejected him without taking him into consideration at all. It was as though a mule, or a cat, had asked her to be his.

But his persistence did not fail. He flung all his other

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pursuits to the wind, and the Pattison villa became for him the centre of the world. Sometimes he caught heavenly glimpses of her. Once again he met her in the street, and once again she overwhelmed him with jeers. So passed January, February, and March.

At the beginning of April he stood one night outside the Pattison gate, waiting as usual, when he saw her. It was after eleven o'clock; she was coming home from the theatre, leaning on the arm of Private Brabant. Brabant, since their meeting in the 'bus, had several times been "out" with her.

As the two approached the gate, Ada saw the little doctor.

"There's that little Chinaman again, John," she said, pressing Brabant's arm. "It's getting too much of a good thing now, isn't it?"

"Confound the little rat," said Brabant, "he wants his nut cracked, I should think, doesn't he?"

The doctor tripped up to them, smiling nervously. Before he could speak Brabant, who had had a glass, said:

"Come, come, Mr. Yen How, get out of this. Can't you see the young lady doesn't want you fooling round her?"

"Well—but—my soldier-friend," said Yen, "there is no harm done——"

"Come, get out of it!" said Brabant more roughly.

"No, no, you go too fast, you see," began Yen apologetically.

"Are you going—yes or no?" said Brabant, now flushing angrily.

"Go away, why don't you?" put in Ada.

"Ah! I—I am here to see my lillee girl," hazarded Yen.

"Oh, don't be a stupid little goose of a Chinaman! Just fancy!" she said.

This was the most unkindest cut of all for poor Yen How. He winced, touched with anger.

"Are you going or not?" said Brabant, with an ultimatum in his tone.

"No!" said Yen; then, more decidedly, "no, no!"

Brabant put out his arm and pushed him on the shoulder. It was not a violent push, but in an instant the doctor's face was almost black with rage. He had in his hand a stout bamboo stick, which he at once lifted and slashed with terrible force across the soldier's cheek, leaving a bruised weal which Brabant bore visibly with him to the grave.

In retaliation the soldier lifted his large and bony fist, and sent it with crushing vehemence into the doctor's face. Yen How dropped, bleeding.

The street was deserted. Not knowing what to do, the girl and the soldier bent over him for about five minutes, when, to their surprise, Yen How raised himself slowly, placed his handkerchief against his red and dripping face, and slowly limped away without a single word.

Once he stopped deliberately as he moved off, turned, and looked at them; and in the moonlight they distinctly saw him twice shake his forefinger warningly in their direction.

Then he went on his way.

Between that night and the beginning of May he never once stepped outside the house in which he lived. He had resumed his close and far-reaching studies.

At the beginning of May he was on board the *Peninsular*, bound for the East.

By the end of July he was a member of the Japanese Parliament.

In November we find him a leading spirit in the *Tsung-li-Yamen*, or Chinese Foreign Office, and making frequent voyages between Tokio and Pekin.

CHAPTER II.

The Heathen Chinee.

Yen How was nothing if not heathen. He was that first of all.

His intellect was like dry ice; he not only had no religious belief, but he despised all religions—the faiths of the West, the superstitions of the East, he despised them all alike. He was full of light, but without a hint of warmth; and so lacked the religious sense.

It is not likely that ordinary ethical considerations would have much influence in checking the aims of such a man. He was like an avalanche, as cold, and as resistless.

What was Dr. Yen How's aim? Simply told, it was to possess Ada Seward, ultimately, and after all.

If the earth had opened and swallowed him, then he would have renounced his hope; but for no lesser reason. He went coolly and patiently to work to secure her.

But no man, surely, ever employed means so huge and complex to an end so small. A European, or perhaps any other man, having once conceived the means, would very quickly have forgotten the end in the tremendous interest of the means themselves. But in all that Yen did the face of Ada Seward was always consciously "before his eyes." The nature of this man was as simple as the elemental rock.

His career in the East, from the first hour of his return, was meteoric. He rose like a rocket. The order of the day in China, and especially in Japan, was Western modernity; and here was a man who simply breathed Western modernity, and who yet was an Eastern of the Easterns. His skin was more yellow than the yellow man's, and his brain was more white than the white man's. When Professor Jepp, the Inspector-General of Roads and Bridges at Tokio, asserted that the Imperial tax in Britain on railway passenger-traffic was, he believed, £3 per cent., Yen How's face wrinkled up into a very chaos of smiles. "No—two," he said quietly; and no one had the least doubt which was right. Yen introduced a new method of protecting bridges from collapse during the almost daily earthquakes of Japan, by means of articulated joists and sleepers. When Dr. Hirsch, the Naval Director at Pekin, introduced a specification for a new battle-ship to be mounted with two 111-ton guns, Yen proved by statistics (which he quoted from memory), that the tendency of the most modern ship-building was rather in the direction of quick-firing and machine-guns, than of heavy armaments. The 111-ton became 67-ton. He was soon invaluable.

About the beginning of the year a new Ministry had been formed in Tokio, and immediately afterwards dissolved; whereupon the Marquis Ito had undertaken to organise a Cabinet and assume the reins. At this time, the people of Japan were strongly excited against what they called the free-booting of Russia and Germany in China, and equally strongly animated in favour of the claims of England in that country. England was, in fact, the *beau ideal*, the object of imitation, the Great Pattern, of Japan. It required no great force of imagination for her to call herself "the Britain of the East"; this notion at once occurred, of itself, to everyone, and, of course, the copyist sympathised with her original rather than with others. With England predominant in China, moreover, there would be an assurance of free trade; and Japan was a trader. So strong was the enthusiasm in favour of England in consequence of these facts, that the nation was even willing to put its whole fleet at the disposal of its Big Model in case of need.

The *ulterior* purposes of Japan, of course, remained in doubt. She was even then building in various parts of the world an enormous additional fleet, which, when finished, would make her a sea power far in advance of any nation in the whole earth, with the exception of England herself. What in the hour of her manhood, when she had cast away her leading-strings, she would do with this vast force was a disturbing question to many; but, meanwhile, it was clearly her intention to use England as an ally—till the years ripened.

Under the Marquis Ito's Ministry Yen How was offered a post of Under-Secretary, but he refused it. He suggested that he should become secretary to the Minister as his private servant; and this was arranged. He knew that high public

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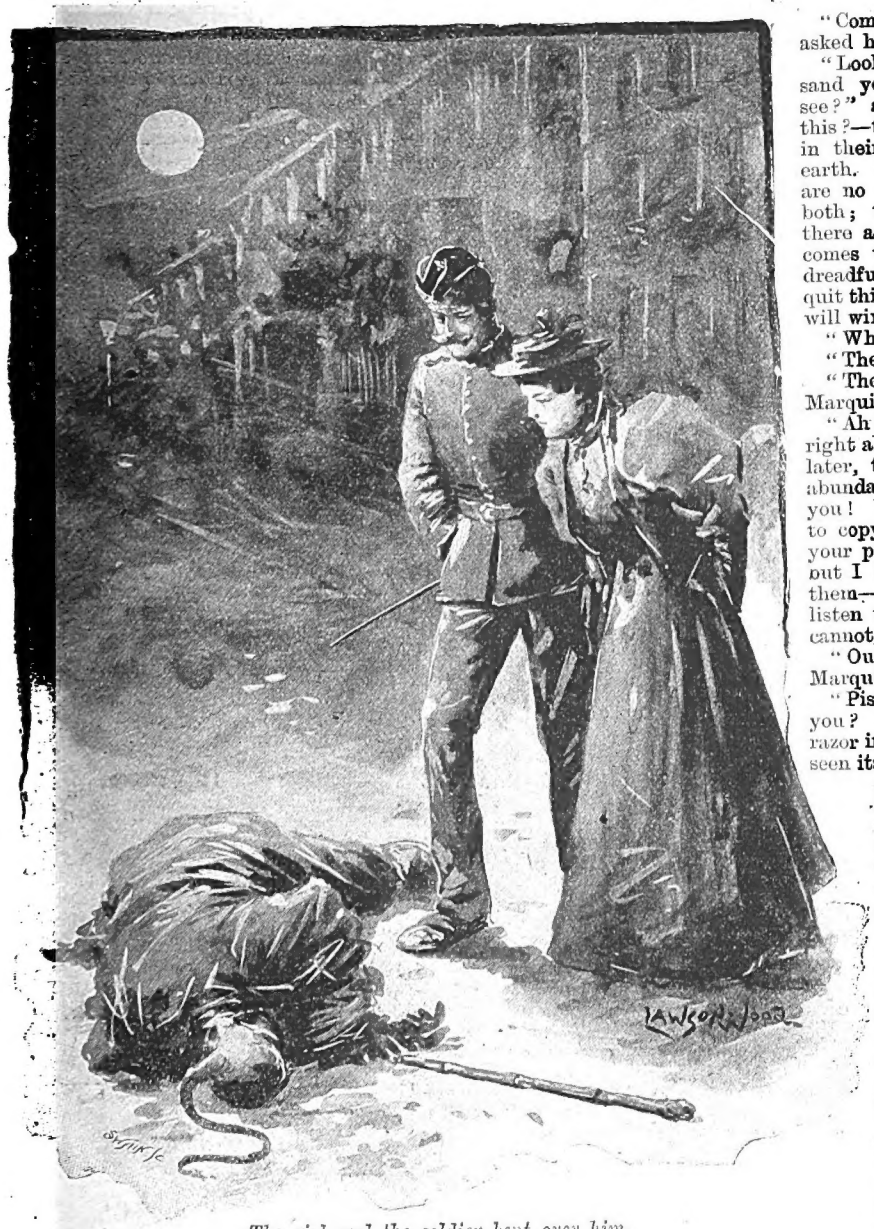

The girl and the soldier bent over him.

rank in Japan would exclude him from high public rank in China, if ever his double personality should become known—and China, for the present, was the chief field of his labours. Meanwhile, he was drawing large revenues as a mandarin, and lived, for his own purposes, in a style nearly princely.

"Pooh!" he said to the Marquis Ito, sipping tea among rugs in his courtyard with the cosiness of the Geisha girl—"there are no statesmen now. Statesmen!—there are no such things. Not here—not in Europe. An ordinary man is a man who thinks in days; a statesman proper thinks in thousands of years. The outlook and computations of a statesman should be as much vaster than those of a private person, as a country is vaster than a tea-house. Believe me, there are no statesmen."

"Come, doctor, why do you say that?" asked his interlocutor.

"Look forward five hundred, a thousand years, Marquis, and what do you see?" answered Yen How. "Is it not this?—the white man and the yellow man in their death-grip, contending for the earth. The white and the yellow—there are no others. The black is the slave of both; the brown does not count. But there are those two; and when the day comes that they stand face to face in dreadful hate, saying, 'one or other must quit this earth,' shall I tell you which side will win?"

"Which do you think?"

"The white will win, Marquis."

"There I differ from you," said the Marquis Ito.

"Ah! you differ from me. But I am right all the same; and I mean, sooner or later, to prove it to you abundantly, abundantly! The white will win, I tell you! You great men in Japan are trying to copy them, to vie with them straining your poor necks to come up with them; but I have passed my life in studying them—and I've got something to tell you: listen to it: you cannot, Marquis, you cannot, you cannot!"

"Our Navy already——" began the Marquis.

"Pish! your Navy! Who built it for you? It was they. Your Navy is like a razor in the hands of an ape which has seen its master use it. The brute may or may not cut its own throat with it. And as soon as they build a navy for you, they will build one twice as big for themselves, and twice as good. There is no reason why you should not follow them, and go on following them—only understand that *you cannot catch them!* And this is another thing that you should understand—that the longer you follow them, the farther they get away from you. Their *rate* of progress is continually increasing. Every day that passes over the world gives them an additional advantage over you. To-day their guns can mow you down by hundreds; in a hundred years they will mow you down by thousands; in five hundred years by millions. Can't you see?—You are losing time!"

"Time? What do you mean?"

"Ah, I mean that there are no longer any statesmen, Marquis. The eye of the statesman ranges far, far into the tracts of the future, doesn't it? But we! Here are we now—we Japanese, we Chinese, we yellow men—playing about in little diplomatic mud-puddles with French, and Russian, and English, and German, as if all that mattered two *sen!* And all the time we keep sitting down idly, blind to the fact that French, and English, and the rest are equally our foe, and tyrant, and vulture, one not more than the other! That if we do not eat them all now, at once, they all will swallow us whole some day. And to see China fighting with Japan in such a case, and Japan banging into China—is it not childish enough to make a donkey, or even a Grand Lama, laugh? There are no statesmen any longer, Marquis."

"Well, come, I see something in what you are driving

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at," said Ito. "We and China fighting were like two birds pecking at each other on a bough, when suddenly they are both down the belly of a serpent, which has been

Yen How rose slowly to his feet.

calmly watching them. Well, but what are we to do? By your own showing, the birds can do nothing against the serpent."

"Did I say that?" asked Yen, lifting his eyebrows in a sly, innocent surprise. "Oh, I didn't mean it! There are many birds, you see, and few serpents. In the world to-day there are 408,000,000 Christians and—mark the figures!—1,004,000,000 non-Christians. I can see that you are startled."

"You think that by sheer force of numbers——"

"Yes, if we had taken our opportunity in time—if we had struck two hundred—a hundred years ago. Even to-day I believe that it is hardly too late, if the yellow race can find a great leader. I am perfectly sure that in a hundred years' time it *will* be too late."

"Why so?"

"I have told you. By that time the white man will have something like a magician's power over all nature. He will say to the mountains and the seas: 'Be removed!'—and at his mere whisper they will obey him. We yellow men, too, will have advanced, but they will have vastly outstripped us. We *cannot* follow them, I tell you. The day will come when our mere numbers will no longer be of any importance in baulking and overthrowing them."

"You talk of big things, my friend," said Ito. "Are you serious?"

"Yes, Marquis, I am serious."

"You advocate a League of the Yellow Races?"

"I do."

"Ha! ha! the idea tickles me; it is so very far from realisation—there are so many obstacles——"

"No, really—I think not. I believe it is very near to realisation. Events are at this moment in progress at Pekin which will *force* it to accomplishment—soon. Suppose I tell you that I, personally, have laid those events in train?"

"You, doctor? What, are you going to lead us all, then, against Paris and London? Ha! Ha!"

"Perhaps, Marquis."

"What, to face the Nordenfeldts, and the Maxims, and the Krupps? The Chinese will run from the first twelve-pounder!"

"*There may not be any twelve-pounders there when they get to Paris and London*," said Yen How, with absolute coolness, yet with an emphasis and an intonation of solemnity in his voice which held the Marquis from answering for quite a minute.

"Really, I don't understand you," he said at last.

"Yet my meaning should be clear."

"No—do explain yourself."

Yen How rose slowly to his feet before he answered.

"Marquis," he said, "is it possible you do not see that China has it in her power to turn Europe into an exhausted waste within, say, three months from to-night, without firing a single shot or spending a single *tael*?"

(*To be continued.*)

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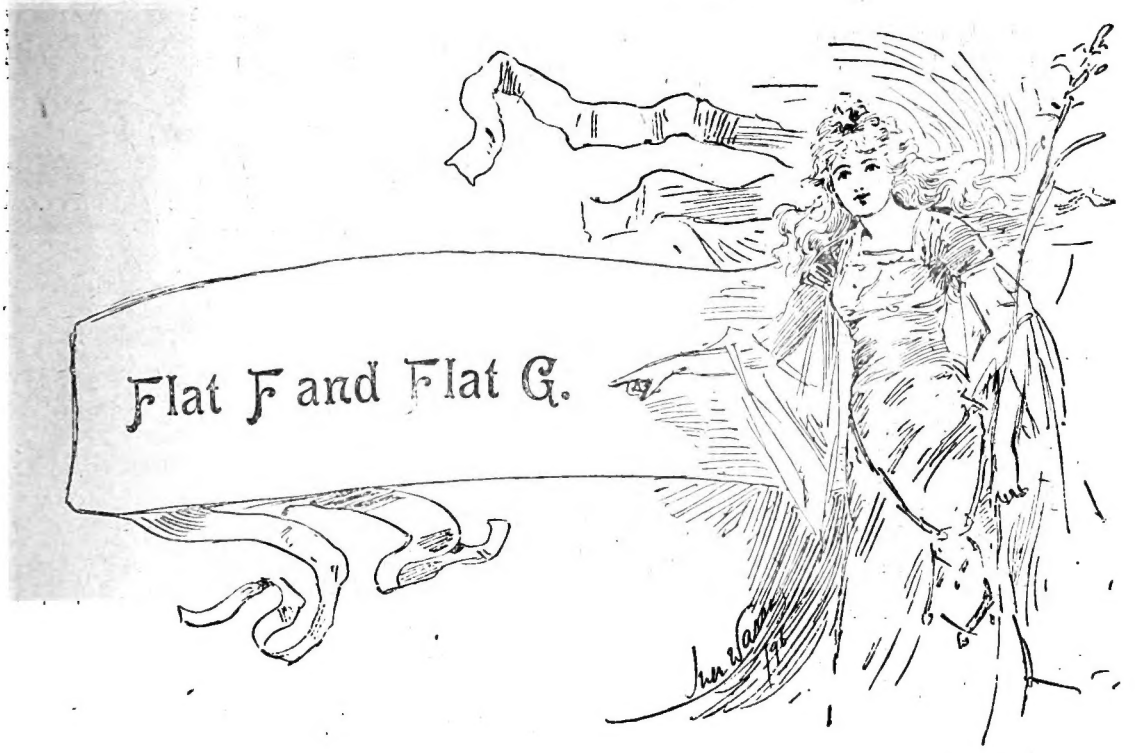

"Good-morning! It's very wet to-day."

"Yes, it generally is when one wants it to be fine."

"You have further to go than usual?" questioningly.

"Certainly—as it's wet."

"I'm sorry, but perhaps it will be fine presently," and raising his hat, as his companion marched off, the speaker turned in the opposite direction.

They resided in a building of flats—he in Flat G and she in F.

They always met at the entrance in the morning, when starting off for their day's work, and the preceding conversation on the weather usually took place, the tenor of it merely varying according to the kind of day it happened to be.

He was an "old young man," with the worn, grey face common to those who work hard, live alone, and view life's pleasures from afar off.

She was an "old young woman" whom hard experiences had embittered and hard work aged.

She was in the Civil Service, and went off to an office every morning, returning at five o'clock each evening. An old woman waited on her occasionally, but she lived quite alone. Sometimes she had a friend to see her, but not often, and she always looked tired.

The inhabitant of Flat G lived alone, and was always tired also, so he was able to feel for her.

He would like to have been friends with her, but she was very short in her manner and resolutely repulsed any overture on his part.

She had had an unfortunate experience with men and distrusted the whole sex. The idea of friendship between a man and woman was to her an absurd idea, if not an impossibility. She laughed scornfully when a friend alluded to such a compact and deplored the depravity of the present age, particularly the freedom of intercourse between the sexes.

Her neighbour guessed her feelings on the subject, and refrained from noticing her as much as he would like to have done.

Not that he admired her in any way, but there were times when he thought a woman's voice might have cheered him. Besides, they were both lonely and had to work hard and find for themselves, so that even though she was so brusque, they would have had enough in common to feed a passing friendship. He had neither mother, sister, nor relative to care what became of him, and he was too poor and proud to make friends, so he had to content himself by just saying "Good-morning" to this strong-minded lady-clerk and discussing the weather.

He thought about her that night after he had taken off his wet things, lighted his fire, and set his own frugal supper. He supposed she was sitting in the room across the landing, feeling just as tired and lonely as he.

It seemed a pity they could not have brightened an hour for each other. He was in that mood when any living creature's presence would have been better than the stillness and loneliness.

It was a mood he often experienced in the evenings, and somehow he did not get used to it.

As it happened, on that particular evening there was company in Flat F. Miss White had one of her fellow-clerks spending an hour or two with her, and the two were chatting over their supper.

"Nell Thurnall is going to be married next Thursday," remarked Miss Poole, the visitor.

"Poor thing," replied her companion; "only a few days more and she will have given up her freedom."

"Nonsense, Annie, you talk like a sour old maid."

"Naturally, since I am one."

"It is your own fault if you are, I expect. Why do you persist in scoffing at love and marriage? Nell

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Thurnall will be much happier than drudging at the office every day."

"Possibly, but it's open to doubt. I don't blame her, I only pity her. She'll find out what men are now, and then it's just a chance if she won't wish for the old office days again."

"Men are not all bad."

"Aren't they? Well, I suppose there may be a few exceptions. Anyhow, they're all selfish."

Miss Poole knit her brows thoughtfully, but changed the subject; she had learnt to know that her friend was incorrigible in this one.

"Do you know your neighbour?" she asked. "He walked upstairs just before me this evening."

"I know him by sight. He always takes upon himself to say 'good-morning' to me, but what on earth for I don't know."

"There's no harm in his wishing you 'good-morning.'"

"No; only my replies are not as a rule appreciative."

"Don't you think it would be nice if you knew him? Perhaps he's dull sometimes, as well as you. I thought he had such a sad, careworn face. Does he live alone?"

"Yes, but he could invite a friend in if he wanted to."

"Does he ever?"

"I don't think so; I've never heard anyone come or go."

"Poor fellow! If I were in your place I should want to be kind to him."

"A lot of thanks you'd get for your trouble!"

"I don't know that I should want any. It might be sufficient to have brightened his life a little. I'm not specially religious, but I do believe in helping to bear one another's burdens when we can. You might have a Platonic friendship."

"Nonsense, the thing is an impossibility; the race is not educated up to it."

"And can't we even have sympathy between men and women?"

"There's too much of it. I've no doubt the good gentleman of Flat G has plenty of friends out, if not in."

"He has a nice face," continued her companion, unheeding her. "I couldn't help feeling sorry for him; he looked so worn and tired."

A month later, Miss Poole again visited the occupant of Flat F.

"Well, are you friends yet?" she asked, in the course of the evening.

"Friends with whom?"

"The gentleman across the landing."

"Indeed, no; what an absurd idea!"

"I hoped you would change your mind after our talk."

"Never likely; besides, I don't suppose he wishes it."

"On the contrary, I think he would be glad. When I went home the last time I was here, I met him again on the stairs, and he looked so miserable. I can't tell you how sorry I felt, he looked so hopeless. Why not try a little friendliness, it could not hurt and you could so easily tell if he preferred to be left alone."

"My dear girl, I'm not a child, and I know men. If he wants a friend he needn't look to me for one. It takes me all my time to keep myself going," and with a determined air she changed the subject.

Upstairs in Flat G the tenant crouched over his fire. He had been shivering all day and his head ached. He felt as if something hot would have set him right, but he had not sufficient energy to get it.

Besides, he felt that he shouldn't mind if he did fall ill and die. No one would miss him and there were many ready to step into his post. It would be hard to die alone, but it couldn't be helped, and perhaps it wouldn't really be any worse than living alone.

The next morning, when he opened his lips to give his usual salutation to his neighbour a violent fit of coughing came on.

She stopped a moment and a faint suspicion of compassion came over her face.

"You have taken cold," she said brusquely.

"Yes," he replied. "I'm afraid I have."

"You don't take care of yourself."

"Why should I? It isn't worth while," he answered, drearily.

His answer rather annoyed her, so she remarked coldly, "Perhaps not," and walked away.

When she had gone a few steps she repented her coldness, and wished she had been a little more sympathetic, for he really looked very ill.

"Still, it's no use now," she argued, "and, after all, it might be a little awkward when he was all right again."

But his face haunted her during the day in spite of her efforts to forget it, and his listless, hopeless eyes seemed to follow her about, asking for a few crumbs of sympathy. Then she grew angry with herself, and argued, "He should get a friend if he wants one. I have shown him that I don't intend to unbend," and she applied herself more assiduously to her office-work.

The next morning she walked downstairs with a set, determined face, but for the first time the tenant of Flat G did not go to his day's work, so her intended hauteur was not called into action.

The following day he was again absent, and her hardness evaporated a little.

During the day she relaxed still more, and decided to speak to him kindly the next morning. But he was absent again, and so she said, "If he does not come to-morrow, I will ask the caretaker about him."

The following day she ate her hurried breakfast with an anxious feeling, in spite of her determined efforts to persuade herself that she was unconcerned.

When she found him again absent, however, the anxious feelings conquered.

She turned aside and knocked at the caretaker's door.

"Is Mr. Hedley ill?" she asked.

"Yes, miss."

"Do you think there is anything he wants?"

"He never asks for anything."

"Has he had a doctor?"

"No, he won't. He gave me strict orders not to send for one."

Miss White glanced at the clock and saw she had not a moment to spare. She hastily slipped her hand in her pocket and drew out a two-shilling piece, which had somehow got loose there, and giving it to the woman, said, in her usual brusque manner, "See that he is well looked after," and vanished.

She set her lips hard as she hurried to the station, and her face was almost forbidding as she elbowed her way down the crowded platform into a third-class carriage.

At the office she was even shorter in speech than usual, and her fellow clerks looked at her and shrugged their shoulders. They thought it was a pity Annie White so completely spoilt herself by her disagreeable temper.

In the evening, she knocked again at the caretaker's door; but she was out, and her husband said she would not be back again for half-an-hour.

So she went upstairs and sat down to her solitary

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meal as usual. Her mouth was still hard set, but every now and then she found herself gazing vacantly into the fire, and her food went almost untasted.

After the third fit of vacancy she shook herself angrily and muttered. "What is it to me? If I were ill no one would bother. It's no use making a fuss. Life's desperately hard for some people and child's play for others. It doesn't seem fair; but that's the long and short of it, and worrying does not mend matters. It's no use making a fuss."

Half-an-hour later she was disturbed by a knock, and, in answer to her summons, the caretaker entered.

"I came to tell you, miss, as Mr. Hedley was asking about you this afternoon. He wondered if you'd be late. I think he'd like to see you. He seems very bad."

"Did he ask to see me?"

"No, but he seemed pleased when I told him you had asked after him, and wondered if you would be late."

"Has he all he wants?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, perhaps I'll go in presently," and she turned away rather curtly.

When the door closed she sat down and stared hard at the fire, and knit her forehead.

All day long she had experienced an impulse to go and see him, and all day long she had fought against it. She argued that when he was well again she could not easily return to the old conditions, and she was still resolutely opposed to the idea of commencing a friendship.

And all the time she knew that she had missed him; had missed his salutation, missed his familiar figure, and was longing to speak that unsaid word of kindness, which was waiting for him.

But she would not approach him first. It was against the principles of her life. He should take the initiative, and send for her if he wanted her. And she sat there hoping and hoping that he would call her to his bedside that she might smooth his pillow and care for him tenderly.

And he, the sufferer, lay in his little bachelor room, yearning for a word from the lips of the woman who had so studiously avoided him, yearning for the touch of her soft cool hand on his burning forehead. But he would not ask her to come. He feared that her susceptibilities would be shocked, and that her opinion of him would become poorer than even now he was afraid it was.

If only she gave him one thought! If only she missed him, even ever so little! But no; he knew she would never trouble her head about him, and a slight flush suffused his cheek as the pain of it gripped his heart.

Then he gasped, and lay perfectly still.

* * * * *

The next evening a white-faced woman crossed the landing, and in her hands were white flowers.

She stepped softly into the chamber of death, and, with set lips, stood beside the still, dead form.

And the little tired smile was still on the dead man's face, for it had not faded at all, and so he went out of the world, longing for that woman's touch which might have soothed the anguish and loneliness of his soul.

Annie White saw it all, and as she laid her flowers in his thin, wasted hands, her lips relaxed and hot tears coursed down her cheeks and fell like bright dew-drops on the delicate blossoms.

When she moved away at last, her head was bent and her steps dragged wearily.

In the outer room she glanced round quickly.

Then, with hands that would tremble in spite of her iron will, she took up an old pipe and a worn tobacco pouch.

"No one will miss these," she thought, and stole back to her solitary fireside.

Gertrude Page.

A GREAT SCHEME.

HOW TO GET ANY BOOK YOU WANT.

WE are constantly receiving complaints from readers that we do not devise competitions in which everybody can enter.

It is difficult to do this—to give everybody an equal chance of success.

However, we think we have hit upon something this time.

Every week we shall give away half-a-dozen books.

All a competitor has to do is to send us one Book Coupon cut from *The Sunday Reader*, one from the *Athletic Record*, and one from *Short Stories*.

Send these to us in one envelope together with a request for any single book in the whole world of literature.

From the applications we receive we shall each week pick out six and send the books asked for.

If you are not successful one week, keep on trying, you are bound to be successful some week.

All applications to be addressed to "BOOKS," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Please let me have: **S. S.**

Book.....

Price.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

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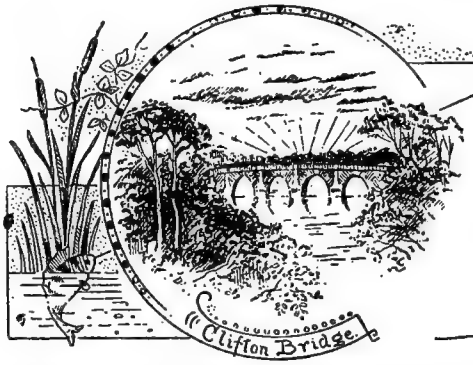

A CURIOUS COMBINATION.

"Yes, I think you have a very interesting collection of curious things picked up abroad," I said as I sat down in the cosy armchair in my uncle's study and smoking-room. "But there is one curio which surprises me, I confess."

"Which was it?" asked my relation, passing the box of cigarettes—he never smoked a cigar. "Why did you not mention it as we passed, as you did several others?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I scarcely liked to do so," I returned. "I have always understood that you were dead against betting—at least, since you settled down in this country; for I did not know you personally before that time. As I was saying," I continued, "you were so much against betting that it did strike me as rather odd that you should have among your curiosities a piece of wedding cake and a racing card under a glass case! And it is a strange combination, too."

My uncle smiled, then his face became grave.

"There is a story attached to that curio," he said, "and that is what turned me against betting. The incident occurred soon after I returned to England. I saved a man's life—somewhat by accident. As we have another hour to while away, I'll tell you about it, if you like. It may point a moral instructive to you," he concluded with a sly glance.

"I should much like to hear it," I replied promptly.

My uncle placed his cigarette on the ash tray, brushed his moustache with his handkerchief, and narrated the following story:

"One of the first persons I met on my return to England—that is, of those known to me, of course—was Sir Ralph Waters, whose acquaintance I had made while he was hunting big game in South Africa. He had no title when I saw him out there, but his father had died in the meantime and he had succeeded to the baronetcy.

"He was pleased to see me and insisted upon my going here, there, and everywhere with him. He was a devotee of horseracing and—to come to the point—I agreed to accompany him to see the City and Suburban. I believe that is the first important race of the year, but perhaps I am wrong. I don't take much interest in the sport.

"Sir Ralph was rather in advance of his appointed time in calling for me on the morning of the race, but as I was ready we started for the station, and consequently had several minutes to wait for our train. While strolling about the platform, Sir Ralph nodded to a good many persons and spoke to some.

"'Hallo, Grainger!' he exclaimed suddenly, as a young man came up to him. 'Are *you* going down to-day?'

"'Going down,' echoed the new-comer. 'I should think so!' He seemed very much agitated; he continually felt his necktie to see if it were quite as it should be, twirled his slight moustache, and did many other things that people generally do when they are in a nervous state.

"'Well, of course,' said Waters apologetically, 'there's no—— But I am forgetting my manners. Allow me to introduce you to my friend, Mr. Harvey.'

"The usual exchange of compliments passed between us; then Waters resumed the thread of his remarks.

"'I thought you were—h'm—otherwise engaged, you know, and too busy to run down to-day. But perhaps she is coming down herself with her father?'

"'N—o—o,' answered the young fellow, nervously toying with his watch-chain.

"'Nothing wrong, I hope?' queried the Baronet. 'You appear to be rather agitated.'

"'N—o, nothing amiss in that direction,' was Grainger's reply. Then, as though he wished to confide in somebody, he continued: 'Got rather a lot on—er—I——'

"'Ah! Been backing the favourite heavily, eh? Feel a bit shaky about it? Got much on it—how much?'

"'More than I can raise, if I lose,' said Grainger, staring absently in front of him.

"'H'm, that's bad,' remarked Waters thoughtfully. 'Whatever made you go it so strong on that horse? You know it's a bit risky under the circumstances, don't you? Suppose the owner were to die before the race—the horse would be scratched and your money gone.'

"'Heavens!' groaned Grainger. 'Don't talk about that! It's like this,' he went on, 'I am to marry her in a fortnight, and I am supposed to have a certain sum put snugly by. But I haven't got it! I have lost a heap lately at cards and so on, and I am in a hole. So I made up my mind to have a big try to recoup over this race. If it wins, I'm all right.'

"'And if it doesn't?' asked Sir Ralph.

"There was just a second's pause; then Grainger, his face a shade paler, opened his coat a little wider and passed his fingers significantly over his waistcoat pocket.

"'Nonsense!' exclaimed Waters with a light laugh.

"Then we had to hurry to take our seats and we lost sight of Grainger.

"'Do you think he will do anything desperate?' I inquired of my friend when we were seated and the train was running along. I felt a trifle nervous about the young fellow. But Waters laughed.

"'My dear Harvey,' he expostulated, 'I have no doubt that the horse will win. The only uncertainty is the life of the owner; if he dies before the race is run—or if

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a telegram is received after the race, to say that he died before the race—I believe the horse is disqualified, and Grainger would lose the bets. I believe that's how it is, and, as he takes it in the same way, I suppose it's correct. But it would be the very perversity of fate if such a thing were to happen! Moreover, if it came to the worst, Grainger wouldn't do anything rash. They all feel like that. He would get over it; his people—or hers—would put things straight.'

"I said nothing, but my friend's lightly spoken words only partly reassured me.

"You do not need that I should describe the races or the other happenings. I waited anxiously for the great event, inwardly praying that nothing would arise, and that Fliegend would win—for Grainger's sake. Strange that I should take such interest in a man who was really unknown to me.

"At last the appointed time arrived. The horses started and went over the ground in splendid style. Fliegend was behind at first, but he pulled up steadily and won easily. I was glad. Others grumbled because there had been 'no race'; Fliegend had had it all his own way, they declared.

"Sir Ralph laughed at the heartfelt manner in which I said I was glad, and left me for a few minutes to talk to some friends. I was watching the scene with some curiosity and forgot him until he grasped me by the shoulder.

"'What's the matter?' I asked, on noticing his agitated face.

"'Just received a wire to say that the owner of Fliegend died fifteen minutes before the race!' he replied; 'and I hear that the news has just reached Grainger and he went off with a fearful oath! I'm afraid he will do himself some harm. Of course he thought he was saved, and the revulsion of feeling is enough to make him desperate. Had it been after the race, I shouldn't have thought so much about it, but now——! Come on!'

"We had been making our way out of the crowd while he was speaking; we now hurried along.

"'Why did the news not reach us sooner?' I asked.

"'He's away, you know,' said Waters, forgetting that I knew nothing.

"'Where are you going?' was my next inquiry.

"'To try to overtake young Grainger. I feel a bit scared about him now. I was told he went in this direction.'

"'But surely they will not disqualify the horse now?'

"'They will. I don't quite understand how it goes with the betting, whether the horse's backers lose or the bets are off; but in any case Grainger means mischief, I fear.'

"We hurried along, making an inquiry whenever we could, but could not find a clue to the young man's whereabouts. We were beginning to despair, when we met a man who, in answer to our inquiry and description, told us that he had seen such a man turn into a quiet lane quite close.

"'He means it, by George!' muttered Waters, just loud enough for me to hear. And he dashed off at top speed, I following at his heels.

"The lane was a winding one; one of those along which you can never see for a much greater distance than half a dozen yards. We ran quickly and quietly along the road. Suddenly, as we turned a bend, the Baronet uttered an exclamation and shot forward with a fierce spurt.

"I could see it all. Grainger stood against the hedge holding a pistol to his temple. Waters leapt forward. There was a report and—although I am accustomed to scenes of bloodshed and the sound of firearms—I shut my eyes.

"'Why did you stop me?' I heard a voice cry, half in sorrow and half in anger.

"Then I knew that Waters had been in time. I opened my eyes and went towards them.

"'Because I don't wish to see you make an ass of yourself,' was Sir Ralph's answer to Grainger's interrogation. 'You will pull through it. Don't be a fool.'

"'I shan't,' cried the young fellow moodily. 'There is no getting out of it, and if you had let me alone I should have been at peace now. I shall do it as soon as you are gone.'

"'Then we won't leave you,' said my friend decidedly.

"'All right,' said Grainger sulkily. 'Take me home, since you constitute yourselves my guardians.'

"'That's the way,' said Waters cheerily. But I was not deceived so easily, and kept my eye on the wretched man.

"It was lucky I did. Just as we reached the end of the lane, I saw him take out a tiny knife and raise his hand. I jumped to his side and grasped his hand just as he was about to plunge the point into a vein.

"We three had a fierce struggle for a moment. We prevented him from accomplishing his purpose, but he would not lose his grip of the knife, and I had to hold the hand while Waters seized the other. We were standing in that attitude, wondering what on earth we should do with him, when an idea flashed across my brain.

"'Where did the owner die?' I asked. The question seemed irrelevant, but I remembered the answer of Waters when I inquired why the news had not arrived sooner.

"'In Madrid.'

"'Madrid?' I echoed in a confused manner. 'But the time is different there! Perhaps the race is legal after all. There's about half-an-hour's difference.'

"Grainger stared at me, then at Waters, and the latter returned the stare.

"'I believe you've hit it,' said Sir Ralph slowly. 'What idiots we were not to think of that before! That means that he died some minutes after the race!'

"Grainger looked from one to the other, scarcely daring to believe that it could be true.

"'Perhaps the telegram stated English time?' he ventured.

"'Not at all!' exclaimed Sir Ralph promptly. 'Grainger, my boy, you are safe! Come away at once. We will arrange it in London.'

"Grainger was more hopeful after that, and we returned to London to find that our ideas were correct, and that the authorities—stewards do you call them?—had decided the matter as we expected.

"When Grainger's marriage took place, I was invited. He took the opportunity to tell me that he had vowed never to bet again; and he also said that he owed his life to me. I brought away with me a piece of the wedding cake and placed it with the racing card in my collection.

"Of course," concluded my uncle, "this is between ourselves! I should not like the story to get to the ears of Grainger's wife or his people. And I have never explained that curio to anyone else."

"You ought to have changed the names before telling me," I remarked with a smile.

"I did," he answered dryly. G. E. Lingen.

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THE PRICE OF A SOUL.

The narrow brown path wound up between the dark green laurels to the door of a cabin that was perched like a bird with wide-spread wings on a shelf of the mountain.

In some places that path was covered with brown, polished pine straw, and overhead the blue sky twinkled between the interlaced needles of the sturdy mountain pines.

At the cabin the path widened out, forming a little unfenced yard where dahlias and sunflowers and mountain lilies grew, and then went out into the blue distance far above.

From the little flower-bordered yard there was a view of a town five miles distant in the valley, and a glimmering river.

Two men sat on wooden benches under the chestnut trees in front of the cabin. One was a young man with a Hercules form and an Apollo face. He was looking now at a train of cars that was crawling like a huge worm through the valley toward the town.

A look of discontent clouded the blue of his eyes, and a frown rested on his brow.

"I wish I'der gone with you, that first summer," he said, in the soft, musical drawl that belongs to the southern mountaineer. "I warn't twenty then, an' I mighter been rich by this time."

The elder man gazed. He was sunburnt and grizzled and keen-eyed. He had just come up to the mountains after a long stay out West.

"I don't know that you'd have made anything worth while, if you'd gone then, seeing that you might have lost what by staying here you have won." His grey eyes turned to the open door as he finished. The keenness left them, and they grew dark and tender. The whole face softened.

Inside, a woman sat on a low chair with a baby in her arms. Down in Mexico, Jack Hawley, the young English engineer, had seen a picture of a Madonna with a face like the one before him. Such a satisfied, beautiful face, with its great brown eyes, waving dusky hair, and gentle smiling lips. For Jeane was happy—simply happy. She knew nothing of the world beyond her quiet mountains—nothing of the pressing forward, the ceaseless struggle that went on there. It had reached Dick, but not the happy heart of his wife. Jeane lived in her own Arcadia, her own Eden!

"It seems to me, Dick, that you've a sort of Heaven up here. I shouldn't want any other if this were mine. And as for money, what could it buy you, man, if in all the world you wanted only this?"

There was a curious ring in the man's low voice.

Dick dragged his eyes slowly from the train of cars that had come to be a slender, moving shadow beside a silver ribbon. An amused smile curved the beautiful lips beneath the dark moustache.

"Shucks, Jack Hawley. I recollect that old foolishness er yourn. Ain't you over it yet? Well, I wisht I'der let yer had her. I wisht I'der swapped chances with you, then I'der had the boodle. I'd ruther have that than——"

"Dick!" Jack's eyes flashed.

"It's so, Jack Hawley. There's no use beatin' about the bush! Hearin' er your luck's brought hit out whar I can't cram hit back. What kin a man do hampered with a wife an' chap?"

"What in the world should he want to do but live and love them?"

Jack Hawley looked at the splendid face before him, and his eyes flashed fire and his tall form quivered. Inside the Madonna face above the sleeping baby slowly whitened and the brown eyes turned black.

"That'll do fur sweetheart talk," Dick said with a bitter laugh. "It don't sound the same when you're tied hard an' fast. If I's foot loose I could make my way with other men. If I's free with a thousand pounds, I could be *somebody*."

"You could be—you are a fool or a devil," Jack Hawley exclaimed, springing to his feet. "Would you rather have a thousand pounds than *that*?" He stretched out his long arm towards the cabin door.

"Well, then, though I don't see as you've got a durn to do with it, I would." Dick could not see inside the cabin. As he finished speaking he rose lazily, glanced up at the sky, and went down the brown path, leaving his visitor alone under the chestnut trees.

Shading his eyes with his great hairy hand Jack Hawley watched him, as with long, graceful strides the man went down.

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Jack's heart was bursting. How lightly this man held what he would have died to win!

He turned to the cabin when Dick's form was no longer in sight.

In the doorway stood Jeane, still and white, her brown eyes shining.

"Jeane!"

"I understood, Jack. It's goin' ter kill me, I reckon."

"No, it shall not. He's a brute, Jeane. He hasn't the heart of a dog."

"It ain't that, Jack. It's that something's kept him back from succeedin'. It don't hurt any worse than the something's *us*." She held the baby closer to her breast.

"You love him, Jeane?"

"Yes," she said simply. Her eyes told how well.

"Has he seemed—" The man hesitated, a flush showing through the brown of his face. He brushed back his grey-streaked hair and went on:

"There's no one else—you are so alone, Jeane, since the old gran'ther died. And he said it to *me*—Dick did. To *me*, and he knew it's been with me all these years—such weary years, Jeane. He let *me* know and you heard; so there's no one else to help you, Jeane—no one but me." His face glowed, his voice rang out triumphantly. "So tell me, has he been careless—or—or——" He took out his great red handkerchief and wiped his lips.

"I don't know, Jack. How should I? I warn't looking for that. I love him."

"Woman, what manner of love is this?"

He was inside the cabin now, standing before her with the little sleeping baby between them.

"Is it strange? It seems mighty nachal ter me," she said.

"And you missed nothing?"

"In Dick? Oh, no! You ain't a woman, Jack, an' so you don't understand. Poor Dick! How han'some he is! He could be a great man where you've been, Jack."

"He's a fool—he's a coward.—"

"No, he ain't. He's just disappointed—he made a mistake. I wisht he'der let you have me, Jack."

"Heaven knows I do. A thousand dollars! Would you rather he had them, Jeane?"

"Yes, *he'd* rather."

"Maybe he didn't mean it."

"He meant it! I felt that. I see now; it's such a pity. I wisht he 'der gone with you. He mighter had a thousand dollars by now."

Jack Hawley's eyes burnt like flame. He dropped the lids over them. A dark, slow flush reddened his cheeks above the grizzled beard.

"He can have it, Jeane. Come away with me, you and—and the little kid, and I'll give him twice—five times a thousand dollars and he will be free. The world can have him."

She caught her breath and looked up at him. His eyes were on the floor.

"Will you do that, Jack? I'm not worth it, but will you? Five thousand dollars! Dick can surely be happy with that. Will you?"

"Yes. I've got it, every cent down in town. I'd double it. I'd give every cent, my last penny, and work for you and—and the little kid, only to be near you, Jeane."

"And he will be rich and free—Dick will," she said, a radiant smile on her white face.

"And you, Jeane?"

"Me? Oh, I shall know that Dick is happy! I can't see any further than that."

The man's face was full of love, burning, intense love as he looked at her, but another face was between, just as it had always been, and she did not see.

"I'll send the money, Jeane. Leave it here where—where he can find it, and come down to the station in time for the six o'clock train. I will meet you somewhere on the path."

"I'll come."

He went quickly away. An old woman hobbled past him and went into the cabin.

She sat down before the smouldering fire, and Jeane laid the child in her arms and began slowly to collect in a little bundle some pieces of coarse clothing.

"Air ye fixin' ter go off? Hit's gwinter rain 'fo' night. I look fur hit to po' cats an' dogs," the old woman said, shivering.

"I got to go, mother. It's fur Dick."

"Fur Dick? He's my own boy, but you're a fool to humour an' do fur 'im an' he keerin' no more'n he does."

Jeane caught her breath sharply. Even the dim eyes of Dick's fond old mother had seen.

Low, rumbling thunder sounded among the mountains. The western sky was dark, the falling of the water not far away sounded sharp and clear. Birds called shrilly to each other.

A boy came to the cabin door with an envelope. Jeane took it and laid it on the table. There was no writing on the outside. She brought a rusty pen and a small bottle of ink and slowly wrote a line across the brown surface. As she wrote a deep crimson dyed her brown, but it faded when she laid the pen aside, and her face was pale again. The characters she had traced on the envelope were cramped and unbeautiful, for Jeane's hand was not used to such work, but it was steady as she wrote the words. A sob rose to her white lips as she turned away, but that was all.

She put on her calico sunbonnet and drew a shawl over her shoulders. Taking up her bundle she slipped it on her arm, and then took the baby from the nodding old woman.

One glance at the envelope on the table, a long shudder and she was gone.

It mattered so little about the storm. The wind was rising. It screamed and sobbed like a lost soul as it twisted the trees and rushed through the rocky gorges. She held her baby close, and clung to the steep brown path. She was sure-footed. It was almost cold on the mountain.

The tall trees twisted and bowed under the blackened sky, a hundred echoes repeated the crash and roar of the thunder. Awful flashes of lightning cut their terrible way across the hurrying clouds, and then a sheet of blinding rain almost swept the struggling woman from her feet. But she went on.

Once through all the crash and roar she heard a voice calling her name. But it seemed to her that it must be only fancy. Who would be calling her back?

She turned when the sound reached her again and looked back. Through the falling rain she saw a face—Dick's face. He was calling her. Of course he did not know that she was getting out of his way. He must have missed seeing the envelope.

She stumbled on. She could not wait to explain now.

Farther down the path she saw Jack Hawley leaping up the mountain side towards her. His tall form was

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bent, and he was coming facing the terrible storm. The path was straight here and she could see both men.

And then the very mountain seemed to be on fire. There was a flash and a crash; the earth trembled. The two men started back, the eyes of each found the other's white face, and between them on the rain-drenched path, her baby on her breast, lay Jeane, her Madonna face turned up to the sky.

Suddenly the rain ceased and the wind was still. There was a great calm. Nature held her breath in pity—in horror.

The two men stood for an instant looking into each other's eyes, then Dick stooped and lifted the little dead baby in his arms.

With a deep sob Jack Hawley raised Jeane's body and held it close to his breast.

Dick turned towards the cabin and Jack followed slowly.

With a soft gurgling sound the fallen rain swept down the mountain side, across the broken flowers in the little unfenced yard under the chestnut trees in front of the cabin door.

The two men went in and silently laid their burdens on the bed.

The old woman sleeping and nodding before the fire did not hear.

Dick pointed to an envelope that lay upon the table. The end was torn across.

Jack Hawley bent down and read the words:

"This is what you wanted, Dick. It is the price of a soul."

"I told you they warn't worth having. That's a woman for you. She was runnin' away with you," Dick said calmly.

A strange smile flittered across Jack Hawley's face He went to the bed and reverently kissed the marble face of his Madonna.

"Yes," he said, turning to Dick. "But a man like you could never understand. I shall not explain. Jeane is safe. You have your wish, Dick; good-love—I hope it is forever," and he bowed his head and went out from the cabin and down the brown mountain path, for beyond lay the world where men forget!

Ellen Wycoff.

"I am afraid the return voyage will seem rather dull to you, captain, after the pleasant time we are all having on the voyage out. Speaking for myself, I can safely say that I have never met such an entertaining companion as our fellow passenger Mr. Merino."

"Yes," I replied. "he has made the trip a very pleasant one, and no doubt the return journey will be a bit dull."

This little talk took place on the deck of the *Bodmin Castle* about three weeks after she had sailed from the Mersey for Melbourne. I thoroughly endorsed all that the speaker had said concerning the personal charms—that is by no means too strong a term to use—of the young Spaniard who is one of my passengers. He was really the most agreeable man I ever met, either on sea or land.

He was a young man about twenty-five, and was making this voyage for the benefit of his health; as he himself had told us, his stay in England—for the purpose of acquiring our language and a knowledge of our business methods—had developed the seeds of consumption which he inherited, and he had been advised to take a long sea trip as the best means of fighting the dread malady.

Everyone on board felt sorry for him, and this sympathy served to make more attractive the charm of his witty conversation. Even the pretty foreign accent and the occasional slips made us like him all the more. I believe that most of the passengers wondered however they would have passed the time had he not been making the trip with us.

The *Bodmin Castle* did not convey many passengers at any time, and on this voyage there were nine. The ship usually carried a large cargo of a mixed nature.

My nine passengers consisted of the following persons: First on the list I place the young Spanish señor; then there was an elderly gentleman, Mr Langton, a merchant in a large way of business (it was he who had made the remark with which the story opened); a brother and sister, aged between thirty-five and forty, who were going out for the purpose of taking up some property; a Mr. Ruston and his wife, middle-aged people; and two other gentlemen who need not be specially mentioned.

All were simply charmed by the Spaniard's amiability

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and polished manner. In spite of his own delicate health—he always wore a thick scarf—he was a good sailor and not in the least affected by the motion of the vessel, whereas the others were all ill. When they were able to return on deck, he was most attentive to them, helping them here and assisting them there, and winning his way into their good books until—by the time we had made three weeks sail—I really believe they would have told him all their private business without scruple had he asked them to do so.

Mr. Langton was about to make some further remark to me when he espied the pleasant passenger.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "There is Señor Merino. He looks a little better. I will see how he feels."

And he went off to speak to him and left me to my duties. I saw Merino seat himself on a stool by the side of an empty cask and set to work diligently at a model of the *Bodmin Castle* which he was making for me, and then I had to turn my attention to something else, and for the time I forgot him.

All went well until we were within a week's sail of Melbourne. One morning, Merino came towards me on the deck, and I noticed that his face wore a worried expression. This was so contrary to custom that I was struck by it.

"Don't you feel well this morning, sir?" I asked. I never called him "señor," as the others did—I'm not much of a hand at those foreign words.

"The fact is, captain," he said hesitatingly, nervously twisting one end of his moustache, "I am a leetle worried."

He looked towards the empty cask, which he had been using as a table while making the model.

"Ah!" I said, noticing the direction of the look. "I know what you are worried about; you are afraid that you won't be able to finish that model of the *Bodmin Castle* that you wish to present to me. Now, it's very kind of you, sir, and I quite understand that a gentleman so good-natured as you are should feel vexed at not being able to keep a promise. But you have kept at that old tub too long for your health, and I shall refuse to allow you to work there any longer. I'll have it taken away."

"Oh, no, you must not do that, captain," he cried, looking quite upset. "Now, promise me you will not have that cask disturbed."

He seemed so bent upon it that I felt bound to assure him that the cask should not be touched on any account.

"But you are wrong, captain," he went on. "It is not that which worries me. I hardly like to mention it, but—but——."

He hesitated, and I waited for him to go on.

"The fact is"—he often made use of those words—"I have lost my gold watch—it has been taken out of my cabin."

I stared at him in surprise.

"Do you mean to say that it has been stolen?" I asked.

"I do," he replied emphatically. "There is no other explanation of its disappearance."

I was furious. The idea of anyone committing a theft was quite annoying enough, but that the victim should be the man who had done so much to make the voyage a pleasant one, who had been so kind and attentive to everybody on board—well, it made me about as angry as any one man could be.

"I'll have this inquired into," I cried. "If that watch is on this ship, it shall be found!"

"Wait a leetle, captain," said Merino rather more quietly. "I should like to find that watch because it was my father's, not so much on account of its value. But I think you will spoil the chances of getting it back if you lose your temper over the matter and order an investigation. I would not have said a word about it, but I think it should be known for the sake of the other passengers. Will you leave it to me and act as I may suggest?"

He spoke in such a winning manner that it was impossible to refuse him. So it was arranged that he should act as he thought best.

When the passengers were all seated at the table, he gently told them what had happened, with many apologies for disturbing their peace of mind.

"I think it only right to tell you," he observed in his most amiable manner, "so that you may take extra care of any valuable property which you may have brought with you. But," he added, "perhaps you have not brought anything very valuable?"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Langton, and all the other passengers looked very serious. "Why, I have a matter of three hundred pounds in cash and notes! What's to be done, captain?"

"I have asked him to leave the matter in my hands, and I think I may recover my property," rejoined Merino before I could speak. "It may be that no further attempt will be made on the goods of the passengers."

"It is to be hoped not," observed Mrs. Rushton nervously. "I wish I hadn't brought so much jewellery with me."

And as similar remarks were made by the other six, I began to get nettled.

"Such a thing has never occurred before while I've been captain," I exclaimed with some show of feeling. "I think I must ask you to release me from my promise, Mr. Merino, and let me work this affair through."

"No, captain," was his decided reply. "I will do it. Perhaps it will be best to begin at once. In the first place, we must search the chests of the seamen. I don't like to do this, but it is evident that the robber must be a seaman. But I understand the British sailor's character, and I know that the men will not like that. Therefore, we—the passengers—must submit to the same ordeal, just to satisfy the sailors. *We* have no reason for avoiding a search, is it not so?"

He looked round at them, and they all signified their willingness, and thought it very considerate of the young Spaniard.

Well, I passed the word round to the men and the officers that a search was to be made of their chests and belongings for Mr. Merino's watch, which had been stolen; and I took care to explain that the passengers' things were to be overhauled as well. The men took it more easily than I expected; they were sorry that Mr. Merino should have lost anything, because he had been so pleasant, and I suppose that quieted them. That is, all but the bo'sun, and he was as mad as a March hare.

However, all had to submit. My chief officer and one of the gentlemen passengers—a quiet man, who said very little—made the search together. But nothing was found, although we ransacked everything and looked everywhere.

"Well, I am sorry," said Merino with a sigh. "I was particularly attached to that watch because it was my father's; but it is—what do you say? Oh, yes, it's no good crying over spilt milk. No."

After that he seemed to forget his loss, and his cheer-

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ful manner returned. He went to work at the model, and remained sitting at the cask best part of the day.

He was really very clever at carpentering. I admired the way he carved the model of the *Bodmin Castle* and mentally promised myself that the model of the good ship should have the best place in my little home when I got back to Old England. Our ship's carpenter was loud in his praises of the Spaniard's cleverness with tools, and lent him anything he might want for the model or any of the other odd jobs that Merino was fond of doing.

We all turned in that night feeling a little more settled. Merino had quite recovered his spirits, and said he supposed that in some way he must have dropped the watch overboard, and he was glad for everybody's sake that the crew had been proved innocent. We all thought it was very good of him to admit that.

But the second morning after the search there was a rare to-do. Every one of the passengers had been relieved of his or her valuables during the night! Merino himself had lost two rings and some cash, but the other eight had lost all. I reckoned it up, and the haul of the thief reached nigh on a thousand pounds!

"I can't stand this," I exclaimed when the news reached me. "I'll turn the ship inside out but what I'll find it!"

The gentlemen were in a rage—even the Spaniard lost his temper and said things in a foreign language that sounded wicked to me. But perhaps they were prayers; I don't care about taking away a man's character when I don't understand the lingo he's talking.

I had another search, but it was no good. Nothing was found.

That night they all turned in as usual, and I suppose they went to sleep some time during the darkness. It was my turn to take the "captain's watch;" I was too vexed at the mysterious affair to turn in before the watch, so it was past four in the morning when I got the chance. But even then I couldn't sleep, so I threw on my things again and made up my mind to sit in my cabin and smoke.

My cabin was situated amidship, and from my window I could command a view of the whole of the deck. I drew aside the curtain and looked out; it was beginning to get light. To my surprise, I saw the señor on deck. I was about to open my door and go on deck to have a talk to him and ask him to join me in a cigar, when his peculiar movements attracted my attention, and made me hesitate.

He looked carefully round, and then walked cautiously towards the empty cask at which he was accustomed to work on the model. Then he gave another very careful glance round. It was now clear to me that he was looking to see if he was being watched; but why?

Then he turned again to the cask and lifted half the top bodily off the barrel.

I leave you to imagine my astonishment and excitement. I could scarcely contain myself. He cast another hasty glance along the deck, then he dived his hand into the cask and drew from it a small black bag which he quickly concealed beneath his coat. Again his hand went towards the cask, but something made him seize the top and replace it quickly.

The cause of this was soon apparent. I saw the bo'sun walking across the deck towards him.

The whole thing flashed across my mind in an instant. I threw open my door and hurried on deck. During the few seconds that passed while I was leaving the window and opening the door, the bo'sun had dashed upon our amiable passenger; so, when I looked again, they were struggling desperately together.

The bo'sun was no chicken, but he had all his work cut out with the Spaniard, and there is no telling how it would have gone had they been left to themselves: but I was on the spot like a flash and we soon had Merino a prisoner.

So this very pleasant young foreigner was the thief after all! The loss of his watch was a get-up to enable him to get an idea of the extent of the valuables on board and—by means of the search—where they were placed. He was a very skilful thief to have managed the robbery in the night. He had secreted the things in two small bags which he hung on nails inside the cask. The way he had faked that cask was very ingenious.

To say that the passengers and everybody else were amazed would be putting it mildly. Nobody suspected him for a moment, except the old salt who had been so annoyed at having his things searched and who had kept a watch on him and discovered the little game.

We handed him over to the authorities on landing, but as no one wanted to stay long in Melbourne, we asked the magistrate to deal summarily with the case. So Merino got off lightly with six months' imprisonment.

I always remember to this day what a very pleasant passenger he was, and regret that a man who could be so agreeable should have turned out such a rogue.

You will get a complete shilling novel and a coloured plate with HOME NOTES published on February 19th, and every subsequent number—all for a penny.

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By
GEORGE
GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Blockaded.

The searchlights flashed out instantly from fore and aft and swept a wide area of the sea, but they only revealed a brief and fleeting glimpse of the flying yacht, for by this time the *Minnehaha's* topmasts were down, her funnels were painted black, her decks covered with black tarpauling, and her white stern and quarters also shrouded in black. And so, with her stern pointed to the *Pocahontas* and affording the least possible object of vision, the saucy little *Minnehaha* raced away at her full thirty-three knots an hour out of the field of light and into the darkness of the great ocean that stretched away to the north-eastward.

"I reckon we fooled 'em pretty slick that time," said Captain Peters to Madame Sybil, who, finding sleep impossible owing to the heat of the night, had left her state-room to come up to the bridge again.

"I really do hope you've given them the slip, Captain," she replied with a little shiver. "I was beginning to be afraid that they would fire one of those big guns at us. I think they would have sunk us if they had done."

"Well, ma'am," said the skipper with a little twist of his beard, "you see the shells from those six-inch guns weigh a hundred pounds apiece, and I guess if one of them hit us and bust anywhere in the veecinity of our boilers the *Minnehaha* wouldn't be good for much except scrap-iron, and that'd have to be dredged for. Still them dynamite guns of ours are mighty handy pepper-boxes, and if we got the drop on them at a good range I don't know that we couldn't keep our end up, for all they carry in the way of heavier metal. But to my mind, running's much more our game than fighting. I hope the Seenyor'll think so too. Buccaneering is a darned sight healthier in a dime novel than on the high seas at this time of day."

"I quite agree with you, Captain," she replied with another shiver, "and I most sincerely hope that Mr. Lorrain will be guided by you. Now I think I'll say good-night again. There is rather too much wind up here for comfort."

As she went down the steps from the bridge Captain Peters looked after her dim white form and said to himself, "That's a mighty fine woman. I guess she wasn't far from the front row when faces were being handed round. Anyhow she's a darned sight too good for that greasy little porpoise that's got her in tow now, and I shouldn't wonder if she was a widow again before long.

"The Seenyor won't have any further use for His Excellence now, if he's located old Christoval's treasure-chest, and I don't think he's just the sort of man to keep useless things like that hanging around any longer than he's got to. She'd suit me all over the back from what I've seen of her so far. A fine woman. Yes, sir, a darned fine woman!"

Meanwhile Madame Sybil had sought a sheltered corner of the deck, and as she sat there with her eyes shut and the swish of the water rushing past the vessel's sides ringing in her ears, her thoughts went back some seven years to that open grave on the little coral island where the first chapter of her life-tragedy had been written in blood. Now that tragedy seemed to be drawing to a climax. How would it end?

What she had said to Captain Peters on the bridge had meant less than nothing. She knew perfectly well that the *Minnehaha's* escape was as hopeless as she had been able to make it. She had an old and bitter grudge to pay off against Lorrain, for she had suffered at his hands the most grievous slight that a man can put on a woman, and now he had murdered her son and, as she believed, robbed her of her one chance of regaining all she had lost and more.

But an opportunity for revenge had come at last. She saw that if the *Minnehaha* were caught in Samana Bay with the treasure on board and the Gold Magnet in the possession either of himself or of the woman who called herself Lady Pendril, not only would his plans be ruined, but the investigation which would be held by the Consul and the commanders of the warships into the disappearance of Sir Harley Pendril and her son could hardly fail to have very serious results for them both.

She had weighed all this very carefully while Captain Peters was telling his story at the palace, and one of her reasons for asking him to delay the sailing of the yacht was to get time to write a letter to Tristam, in which she told him, not only all that she knew, but a little more which she guessed, including of course the destination of the *Minnehaha*.

She had stipulated for half of what might be found in the treasure-chest as the reward for her information, and the risk that she had run in making Lorrain an open enemy, and Tristam had sent a reply back by her own messenger accepting the terms. It was this letter which had brought the *Hermione* and the *New York* on their apparently useless journey, in the wake of the *Pocahontas* and the *Minnehaha*. They were bound for Samana Bay as the *Pocahontas* was, and while Captain Peters was congratulating himself on

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having given them the slip so nicely, the three vessels were steadily ploughing their way round the east of the island to their common destination.

It was towards the evening of the next day that Lorrain and her ladyship, with the remains of the expedition, reached the squalid little town of Savana la Mar. They had brought none of the treasure which the Gold Magnet had pointed out with them. Lorrain had contented himself with digging down into the bank of the stream with his little pick, until he had found the chain attached to the treasure-chest. He had then made a few measurements and a rough plan which no one but himself and his companion could understand, and then he had covered the chain up again and they had left the spot. Her ladyship would dearly have loved to have had a glimpse of the chest itself even if she could not see its contents. Those she was prepared to take on trust, for the present, for the behaviour of the Magnet had shown her that it must have been attracted to the spot by a very large mass of gold. But Lorrain had satisfied her that, all things considered, it would be much better to postpone the pleasure to some other time when circumstances should be more favourable.

There were no signs of either the *Minnehaha* or the *Pocahontas* when they reached the shore, although either of them could have run round from Santo Domingo in a day. From this Lorrain concluded that Captain Peters was lying well out to sea waiting to run in under cover of darkness, and this proved to be correct, for a little after ten o'clock the yacht's long boat grounded on the beach, and Captain Peters himself came up to the camp which they had pitched a little behind the village, which did not boast accommodation for travellers. When he had told his story Lorrain clapped him on the shoulder and laughed.

"Well done, Captain Peters, very well done! We have found where the treasure-chest is, and when it's convenient to go and dig it up you shall have a bit more than your share for bringing my friend the President and Madame Sybil round. That was very clever, and as soon as we're well outside I'll give my little friend Gregorio the choice between a dance at the end of a rope, or the jump from the end of a plank in the good old style. That would have been a very pretty little scheme of his to start Tristram and a squad of men up the river after us. The little blackguard knew perfectly well that there would be a fight if we met and he meant that there should be one, which would have taken the form of a convenient massacre of the survivors by disbanded revolutionists, and His Excellency would have come into a nice little thing. I shall be interested to see what he and Madame Sybil say when they find we haven't brought the treasure with us."

"I guess his Excellence'll be about the maddest man this side of the Arctic circle, and as for Madame, why she'll be a trifle mad, too. Still she might have a chance of some of it later on. To tell you the truth, Seenyor, that's a mighty fine woman, and it wouldn't exactly break my heart to see her a widow."

"A widow!" laughed Lorrain again. "I don't suppose if the truth were known she's anything else now, Captain, but anyhow we'll make quite sure of that to-morrow, if not to-night. You don't strike me as exactly a marrying man, but for all that I wish you the best of good luck in your love-making, or whatever other means you propose to use to bring the lady round to your views. I'll give the bride away with pleasure."

"And I shall be most happy to act as bridesmaid," added her ladyship, who had her own reasons for thinking the arrangement a very satisfactory one.

In a couple of hours the boat had put off again with the remains of the expedition and its impedimenta on board, and for two hours more its six oars propelled it quietly and swiftly over the smooth waters of the bay towards Cape Samana, off which the *Minnehaha* was lying about a couple of miles or so from the land, as Captain Peters had not thought it prudent to take the risk of being blockaded in the Bay.

A single faint light guided the boat to the yacht. The showing of this was an unfortunate necessity, for it also betrayed her whereabouts to the *Pocahontas* and the two cruisers which were lying about five miles farther out, and which so disposed themselves that the *Minnehaha* would be forced to run out to sea between the *Pocahontas* and one of the warships or go dangerously near the shore.

When they got on board the first thing Lorrain did was to send for Madame Sybil and tell her point blank what she and Don Gregorio had been brought on board the yacht for, and how he proposed to punish the President's treachery as soon as they got out to sea. Startling and even terrifying as the news was, she took it with a calmness that would have surprised him less had he known as much as she knew about the *Pocahontas* and her consort. She merely shrugged her shapely shoulders and said:

"Of course, you are master here, Francisco, and you can do as you please. As for Gregorio, well, I am even more tired of him than I got of you, so I don't suppose I shall be inclined to put on weeds for him."

"You are candid, if not very complimentary, my dear Sybil that once was," he replied, with a sneer in his tone that brought the blood to her cheeks. "But I'm glad that you take it so sensibly. By the way, talking about weeds, it may interest you to know that you really are a widow. Our mutual friend Tristam buried your late husband about six months ago up country yonder. We saw the grave a day or two ago, and curiously enough it isn't a thousand miles from the very spot where the treasure-chest is buried. Rather a singular coincidence, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said; "it is. And so poor Arthur is really dead at last. I treated him very badly, didn't I, poor fellow?"

"And yet not quite so badly as you and he treated poor Sir Harry Viney, if his last dying speech and confession to Mr. Tristam was true," added Lorrain.

"What!" she said starting back. "He must have been mad. Besides what was there to tell? Harry died on the island of exposure and fever, and added to that he was very badly injured on the night of the shipwreck."

"Exactly," said Lorrain with a little wave of his hand. "Exactly. He died on the island, and, after all, the particular illness doesn't matter now. You needn't be afraid. You can rely absolutely on my discretion so long as I can rely on yours. And now I would suggest that you should retire and get a little sleep if you can. I don't suppose you will be anxious to see Don Gregorio again, and I will spare your feelings by settling my little account with him before you are up. Good-night and pleasant dreams! Come in. Well, Captain, what is it?"

Captain Peters came into the cabin with a very ugly look on his face.

"It seems to me," he said in an even drier and harder tone that usual, "that someone's been and blown the gaff on us. Anyhow, there's that darned yacht outside and them cruisers on either side of her, and they've got a drop on us with their searchlights so's we can't get away nohow without being seen. Darned if I know how it's happened! Maybe his Excellence might be able to tell us."

Lorrain looked round at Madame Sybil with an expression on his face that she had seen there before, and she gathered from it that something very uncomfortable was going to happen before long. Then he turned to Captain Peters and said:

"That's rather awkward. I was in hopes we should be out before they got here. I have no doubt friend Gregorio left a message for them. Well, we have to get out somehow. Peaceably if they'll let us, but if not I shall fight. You've got plenty of steam, I suppose?"

"You can gamble on that, Seenyor; the Chief ain't quite the man to leave his pets without breath when there's a

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chance of a run on hand. You can have thirty knots right away, I reckon, and five more when they're wanted. And I guess you'll want them too."

"Very well," said Lorrain, getting up from his chair. "If you'll go and have everything ready I'll be on deck in a very few minutes. Stand straight out to sea at ten knots, and have the ammunition out and the guns loaded. Send someone to rouse up the President and tell him I want him on deck at once. Sybil, if you can keep awake for another hour or two you will probably see something interesting now. I'm going to wake her ladyship up to see the fun. There'll be room for both of you in the wheel-house if you would like to go up there. If there is any shooting it won't be more dangerous there than in any other part of the yacht, for if one of their big shells hits us it will sink us, I suppose, and you may as well be drowned in the fresh air as in the cabin."

When they got up on to the bridge Lorrain saw that the *Pocahontas* and her consort evidently meant business. Their searchlights flooded the water, and the yacht was an easy mark for their guns. When the astonished President came up he said to him with a harsh ring in his voice that made the little man feel anything but comfortable:

"Don Gregorio, you've been playing me false——"

"By the Holiest Mother, Don Francisco——"

"That'll do. I don't want any more lies. You know how I deal with anything like treachery. No, it's no good trying to kneel down, and if you kick up a row I'll have you gagged."

Don Gregorio was already grovelling at his feet, praying and whining for mercy in mingled English and Spanish, but Lorrain soon cut this short by ordering a couple of quartermasters to pick him up and tie him to the starboard end of the bridge. Then he slipped his arm through her ladyship's and drew her to the other end, leaving Madam Sybil to her own devices in the wheel-house.

"Are you really going to fight them all, Francisco?" she said, after a quick, half-frightened glance about her. "Surely this one little ship won't be anything like a match for them!"

"I shan't fight at all if I can help it, Jessie," he said, "for this is distinctly a case for running away if I can manage it in safety, but if I have to fight I will, and if I do get out and Tristam persists in following me, he'll get hurt. I shall try and give the two cruisers the slip, and then if he likes to follow, he can do it at his own risk. It's rather a curious situation. They have no real right to stop me or even to follow me about like this, and yet I can only stop them by committing an act of piracy which would make me an outlaw and render the *Minnehaha* liable to be sunk on sight. And yet, you see, if I don't stop them and if I can't run away from that infernal ship of Tristam's, he can follow us all the world over if he likes and have us both arrested the first chance he gets in a British port—you for having unlawful possession of the Gold Magnet, and myself on suspicion of having unlawfully disposed of the boy and your late lamented husband."

"Fighting would be better than that, whatever the consequences," she replied, coming closer to him. "Fancy the horror of a trial and all the rest of it! Ugh! I hope we get away all safe."

"Well, we'll have a try anyhow, and it shan't be my fault, dear, if we don't. Captain Peters, are those guns ready?"

"They are, Seenyor, and we've a full head of steam whenever you want it."

"Very well then, quicken her up to twenty knots and see if you can run through between the land and that cruiser."

The cruiser was the *New York*, and as the *Minnehaha* swung round and put on speed she too quickened up and stood in towards the land as though to head her off.

Lorrain watched her for a few moments as though calculating his chances, and then he said in a low, sharp tone to the Captain:

"We can just do it I think. I shan't fire unless he does, but we must be ready. Full speed ahead now, every ounce you've got!"

Captain Peters sent the signal down to the engine-room and repeated it, and the next minute the whole vessel was throbbing and quivering and panting like a labouring, living thing in agony. Her stern seemed to sink into the boiling mass of foam churned up by her whirling screws, and her sharp, graceful bows rose till the fore-foot was out of the water. The captain of the *New York* saw that in a few minutes she would slip through between him and the land, and he knew that if she once did that she was lost, for the *Pocahontas* was a couple of miles away at least, and the enormous speed of the *Minnehaha* would very soon take her out of range of the searchlights.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Gone Away!

So fast were the two vessels going that it was a matter of some little difficulty to keep the light on the *Minnehaha*, and every now and then she seemed to change from substance into shadow, but when she was about a thousand yards away a combined glare fell on her deck again. The captain of the *New York* saw the long, wicked-looking dynamite guns trained on to his own vessel and the men standing beside them ready to open fire.

"I can't stand that!" he said, taking his glasses from his eyes. "I don't know whether she's bound for Cuba or not, but she's going that way and that's near enough for us. We'll try what a four-inch shell over her bows will do."

A few moments later those on board the *Minnehaha* saw a pale flash leap from one of the cruiser's forward broadside port-holes. The gunner had miscalculated the speed of the yacht and the shot, instead of passing, as was intended, across her bows, went over them, striking the man on the look-out and killing him instantly.

"First blood!" said Lorrain with a note almost of exultation in his voice. "Now I think we can give Uncle Sam a lesson in the new gunnery. Ready with those after-guns there! We are round the Point now. Lay her dead stern on to the cruiser, Captain. Then you and Mr. Lennox take a gun apiece. Go for his funnels and top-works. Don't let a light be shown on the ship."

The *Minnehaha* swung half round and at once vanished out of the field of the searchlights. The next instant there was a little flash of fire from her stern, then another and another, and within the next few seconds nearly forty pounds of dynamite had exploded on board the *New York*, for as long as the searchlight was not falling full on the *Minnehaha* it made a splendid mark and every shell went home.

The damage done by the dynamite was of course immense in proportion to the size of the shells which carried it. The steel armour of the deck and the casemates was burst in and split up. One shell had passed into the forward upper battery and burst inside it, killing every man and disabling every gun in it. The third had struck the forward funnel and instantly reduced it to a crumpled mass of old iron. The speed of the *New York* at once dropped from twenty to about fifteen knots. A few moments later every gun that could be brought to bear on the flying yacht, which was now only a dim little shadow on the dark oily water, burst into thunder and flame, and a perfect storm of projectiles from eight inch shell to Gatling bullets went hurtling and hissing through the night.

Lorrain had anticipated this, and as he had fired his third gun he ordered the helm to be put over, and the nimble little craft spun round and darted away at right angles to her former course. The result was that when the shot storm arrived she had left, and several hundred pounds worth of Uncle Sam's ammunition plunged with a great splash uselessly into the sea.

"That'll do for her, I think," said Lorrain. "They won't

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get twelve knots out of her now the funnel's gone. Here come the others. Now, Captain Peters, that one to the left is the English cruiser. I'll give you £500 if you'll do the same thing to one of her funnels, or both. You've got her dead on now. Hit her hard! If we can make her drop back out of range the thing will be evened up a bit. Steady the helm, get her dead stern on. Now I think you've got her."

Captain Peters "let her go," just as the *Minnehaha* rose on a long swell and the *Hermoine* was sliding down the slope of another one. His glasses showed Lorrain a bright flash bursting out close beside the six-inch quick firer on the *Hermoine's* fore-deck, and the next instant her searchlight vanished.

"Good, but not quite good enough, Captain!" said Lorrain. "Still, you must have done something besides putting the searchlight out, or he would have answered with that big gun before now. Let's see what you can do, Mr. Lennox."

The chief officer had meanwhile been watching his opportunity, and, as the fast-flying *Minnehaha* rose on top of another swell, and the range-finder showed that the gun was truly laid, he dispatched his projectile. It struck the cruiser somewhere on the side, probably on the superstructure, and as it burst it must have done some damage. At the same moment the *Hermoine* opened fire herself, although there was very little to shoot at, for the *Minnehaha* was now nearly four miles away. A couple of six-inch shells burst on either side of her, but did no damage, and meanwhile Captain Peters fired on the flash, and again, thanks partly to his own skill and partly to the perfect automatic aiming apparatus attached to the guns, the shell dropped on the *Hermoine's* deck amidships. She answered, but the shot dropped short a couple of hundred yards behind the *Minnehaha*.

"That'll do, Captain," said Lorrain. "If you haven't stopped him he's lost the range, and that comes to the same thing. It's splendid shooting and worth the money. Now we've only got our good friend Tristam to deal with. I think he's within range. Try a sighting shot at him. We shall have to fight it out now, whatever the end of it is."

Captain Peters fired almost as the last word left his lips, and at the same moment a burst of flame came from the decks of the *Pocahontas*. A six-inch shell went screaming through the air just over their heads, but a ripping and splintering about the deck and one or two shrill cries of pain showed that the projectiles from her lighter batteries had taken effect. One of these had also chipped a piece out of the side of one the *Minnehaha's* funnels, and the imperfect draught at once began to tell on her steaming power.

Captain Peters was immediately equal to the occasion, and after clapping a sheet of canvas over the wound in the outer skin he lashed it firmly on and stationed a man by it with a mop and a bucket of water to keep it cool. On the other hand those on board the *Pocahontas* found that firing their heavy guns dead ahead perceptibly diminished their speed, and the two lieutenants decided to content themselves for the present with the three-pound and four-pound quick-firers which could be trained dead ahead.

The *Minnehaha* of course showed no lights, but her pursuer was forced to keep her searchlight going even to catch an occasional glimpse of her, and this searchlight afforded Captain Peters a very convenient mark. In fact his twelve-pound dynamite shells kept dropping in such unpleasant proximity and burst with such well-timed precision in the water, that the two lieutenants, who now had charge of the ship, felt obliged to order all non-combatants below, an order which Courtland and Tristam flatly refused to obey, although they were very careful to see that the ladies did so.

The two yachts were now doing their utmost, and were flying through the water at a speed never attained by any vessel of their size before. Courtland had promised his stokers a hundred pounds an hour for every knot above thirty that they got out of the engines, with a thousand pounds to the engine-room if the *Minnehaha* was overtaken, and Lorrain had been even more magnificent in his promises; but after all the result of the chase depended as much on the guns as on the engines, for a shot that wrecked a funnel or tore out a plate near the water-line would settle the race in a very short time. Their speed was so nearly equal that if no accident happened to either they might remain within reach of each other for hours.

"I guess, Mr. Lennox, this is getting a bit too sultry to be healthy," said the skipper as another six-inch shell went screaming just over head. "He's only got to hit us once with one of them bottled thunder-storms and then come and pick up the pieces if there's any left. Wait until we rise on the next swell and shoot with me. Go for the light and shade your eyes careful. Ready now. There she goes, rising nicely. Now—let her go!"

The two guns spoke simultaneously. A few moments later the searchlight on the *Pocahontas* vanished in the midst of a blaze of yellow light. Another flash followed instantaneously lower down.

"Good shot, Lennox! I don't know which it was but it's doused his glim anyhow. Now I guess we'd better get out of this track. We hit him pretty hard that time, Seenyor. It wouldn't be a bad thing if we made a due east course now till we've cleared the islands and went and got a bit of breathing room in the Atlantic. These waters are getting a bit too crowded for us according to my way of thinking."

"Yes, that's not at all a bad idea," said Lorrain, "if we really can give that fellow the slip, though I should rather like to know how much we've hurt him before we say good-bye."

"It's a bit risky, Seenyor, unless you're on for a fight to a finish, if you'll excuse me giving an opinion, but if you want to give him the slip we can be ten miles away while he's groping around looking for us now that he's lost his eye. Ah, there goes his after-light again. But see, we're out of range. That means he's falling back, so I reckon we hurt him somewhere in a tender place with those last two shots. Shall we go round, Seenyor?"

Lorrain hesitated for a few moments before he replied. He would dearly have loved a fight to a finish, and if the *Pocahontas* had been alone he would probably have sacrificed his prudence to his hate and continued the fight until one of the two had gone to the bottom. But there were the other two cruisers coming up behind. He could see their searchlights playing and signalling on the horizon, and before the work was over one or both of them would come up, and then it might not be the *Pocahontas* that would go to the bottom. He thought of Jessie, too, and the Gold Magnet and its wonderful possibilities, and he felt a natural inclination to try them a little further after the wonderful, if unsatisfactory, proof he had had of them up the Ozama. So, after a brief debate with himself, prudence got the upper hand and he turned to Captain Peters and said:

"Well, yes, perhaps that's the best thing to do. There's no point in fighting the three of them and getting blown out of the water. Put her due east and go ahead for all she's worth."

"Right, Seenyor!" was the reply, and the word was at once passed to the wheel-house to alter the course to due east.

Lorrain then went forward and met her ladyship just coming from the bridge.

"Well?" she said; "is it all over?"

"It is all over for the present, your ladyship," he said. "We've managed to give them the slip without getting very much damaged, and now you see we are practising the better part of valour. I should very much have liked to stop and have it out with friend Tristam and, if possible, given him and his wife and perhaps Miss Harley, too, the

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pleasure of our hospitality for a little. It would have been a pleasant little change for you to entertain your late mistress and her friends here, wouldn't it?"

"I don't know," she said rather dubiously. "Your hospitality seems to have rather unpleasant consequences sometimes, and I'm afraid you'd do something horrible to them. By the way, may I ask what you're going to do with the President?"

"Hang him at daybreak!" said Lorrain shortly. "The treacherous little hound isn't fit to live. That's all the hospitality he's going to get, the little rat. Quite good enough for him. But if I had Tristam and his wife safe on board, I should feel inclined to take them down to Trinidad and tie them up to a couple of rocks face to face, so that each could watch the land-crabs pick the other one's bones. But perhaps I may have that pleasure yet. I've not done with them by any means."

"And what about madame yonder?" she asked, with a little motion of her head towards the bridge where Sybil was talking to the still captive President.

"Well, I suppose I should be justified in stringing her up beside him," he said, wondering whether her ladyship had any idea of the cause that Sybil had to hate him. "It's just possible, you know, that she may have had as much to do with putting those cruisers on our track as Gregorio had, but still, although I have no very particular reason to love her, I hardly think I could bring myself to perpetrate such woeful waste of handsome femininity as that. Physically, at any rate, she's a great deal too good for hanging."

"Then why not bestow her on the gallant captain?" said her ladyship, with a malicious little laugh. "What a pair they would make, and what a life he'd lead her! Can't you imagine what a hateful little tyrant he'd be as a husband?"

"Yes, that's not at all a bad idea," said Lorrain. "The skipper as a married man would be distinctly a study in matrimony, and if Madame Sybil doesn't like it, well, I'll give him carte blanche to make her."

"Capital!" she said. "And now that we have so far settled our domestic affairs, may I ask what we are going to do next? Are you going to the island to find the old treasure-ship?"

"No," he said. "I'm afraid I can't do that yet. You see, Tristam knows about its being there, and as he's lost us he'll go and look for it. He knows that you are here, and will therefore guess that you've told me about it, so the odds are that by the time we got to work he'd turn up with the two cruisers, and take the lot of us prisoners. No, I've been thinking a good deal the last hour or two—I always do think well when there's any excitement on—and I've come to the conclusion that we may as well fly at higher game. You see we're pirates now, just as much pirates as any lot of ruffians who ever flew the Jolly Roger. We have fired on two warships and a private yacht, and hurt them badly. We've probably killed several men fighting under the British and American flags, and so, as we have graduated in the profession, we may as well go ahead.

"Now there are plenty of treasureships besides that old Spanish one on the Cay, which may or may not have anything in it. The rivers will be opening in a week or two up in Alaska and the gold will be coming down in millions from Klondyke. That's the sort of happy hunting-ground for us. We know there'll be gold in those ships and we shall be able to clear half a dozen of them out before any one can stop us. We can be round in less than a month if it's decent weather. Of course we may have to collar a steamer or two and take her coal out, but we can't help that. I don't see why we shouldn't have a royal time and make millions in a few months. Then we'll buy some more ships like this and a slice of nice territory somewhere in South America, or else an island in some pleasant out of the way situation and start a kingdom on our own account. How does that strike your ladyship?"

"Glorious!" she said. "I can fancy myself a pirate queen."

"I'm glad you said queen," he replied, slipping his arm round her waist, "because that implies a king, and there isn't going to be any other king in that country——"

"But your noble self, I suppose?" she interrupted, looking up with a smile that was half shy and half saucy.

"Exactly," he said, stooping and kissing her. "And now I think it about time your majesty went to bed. When you come on deck to-morrow you will find yourself a good distance on your way to El Dorado in the north. Good-night!"

(To be continued.)

A Fine February

MAY OR MAY NOT BE PREDICTED BY THE WEATHER PROPHETS, BUT WE CAN GUARANTEE

A Fine February Number

OF

PEARSON'S MAGAZINE

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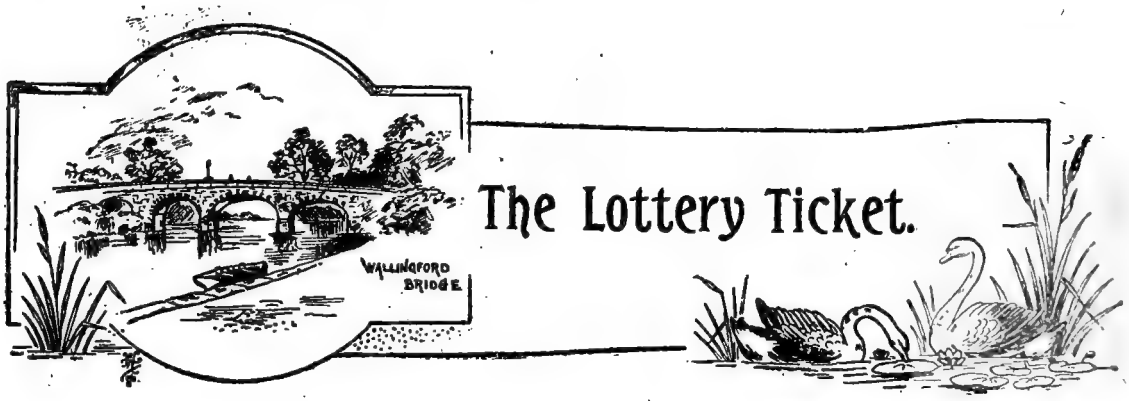

The Lottery Ticket.

So you want to hear the story of my marriage? Listen then, and you will say that it is an odd one.

It was late—near midnight—one cold, stormy night. I came out of a café, when a slender little girl, with dishevelled hair and wrapped in an old ragged shawl, begged me to buy the tenth of a lottery ticket. I took it and gave her an enormous sum—in her estimation—for it. I gave her a *peso*. Her sweet smile fully repaid my generosity.

"It will bring you luck, señorito," she affirmed, with the soft, clear pronunciation of the girls of Madrid.

"Are you sure?" I asked jokingly, as I slipped the ticket in my overcoat pocket, and folded my silk muffler closely round my throat, to protect me from the chill December winds.

"Of course I'm sure of it! Just as sure as you are that you have bought the ticket. The number—you watch the list when it comes out—is 1420; the exact number of the years of my life, fourteen, and the days of the month over, twenty. I wish I had bought the whole of the ticket instead of the tenth."

"Well, child," I responded, with the generosity, and tranquility of an old gambler who knows that he has never gained a cent, "don't worry, if the ticket draws a prize half of the tenth is for you and half for me."

"Señorito, for Heaven's sake, tell me your name, your street and number. I know that in four days more we shall win the grand prize."

I hesitated for a moment, then told her my name and where I lived. Ten minutes later, when I hurried through the Puerta del Sol to the Calle de la Montara, I had completely forgotten the incident.

Four days passed. I was still in bed one morning about ten o'clock, when I heard the "grand list" being called out through the streets. I sent my servant out to buy one, and when he brought it to me, my eyes immediately fell upon the number of the first prize. I thought I must be dreaming! No, I was awake! there it was! 1420—my tenth part of the ticket, the age of the seller, and good luck for her and me! Those blessed cyphers represented many thousand duros.*

I got up hastily, completely overwhelmed by my good luck, my legs shook, and cold perspiration came out all over my body. Do me the justice to believe that I never for one moment thought of taking back my offer. The little girl had brought me luck, she had been my mascot! It was a business transaction! We must divide the gains!

*A duro equals four shillings.

Then it occurred to me to take a look at the ticket I remembered perfectly that I put it in an outside pocket of my overcoat in order not to unbutton it. Where was my coat? Ah, there, hanging on its hook. I searched that overcoat thoroughly. Not a sign of the ticket.

I shouted furiously to the man and asked him if he had shaken my coat out of the window. Of course he had shaken it and brushed it carefully, but he had seen nothing drop out of the pockets, absolutely nothing! I looked at him, his face showed his veracity and honour. During the five years he had been in my service I had never detected him in the smallest theft.

I blush now when I think how I swore at that poor fellow.

I was frantic over my loss. I lighted a candle and searched in every corner, emptied my wardrobes, looked over my old papers, and carefully investigated the waste-paper basket. Nothing! Nothing! My hands were burning, my mouth dry, my heart filled with rage.

Late in the afternoon, I was lying on the lounge, smoking and still pondering over my horrible disappointment, when I heard a sharp ring at the bell, the sound of a discussion at the door, the protestations of someone who wished to enter, and then there appeared before me the little lottery ticket seller, who threw herself into my arms, with tears in her eyes, crying: "Señorito, señorito, we have drawn the grand prize!"

Alas for me! I fancied that I had already gone through the worst of my trouble, but I was mistaken. I had to tell this poor little girl, stammering like a criminal all the while, that I had lost the ticket, I could not find it anywhere, and therefore she could expect nothing from me.

I dreaded to see the look of sorrow and distrust come into those beautiful brown eyes.

But the little girl, raising her head, looked at me serenely and said, shrugging her shoulders: "Well, señorito, you and I were not born to be millionaires."

How could I repay the confidence of that disinterested child? How could I make fitting compensation for what I owed her? Yes, what I owed her!

My remorse and the conviction of my grave responsibility weighed upon me so heavily that I sent her to my mother to be well brought up. I educated her and finally married her.

And the most notable part of this story is that I have been perfectly happy ever since.

Emilia Bazan.

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I was supremely happy. I use the superlative because, in all truth, I had never been so happy before. The cause of this ecstatic condition was the very ordinary fact that I had asked Beatrice Alden to be my wife, and she had consented.

I do not know what other men have felt under similar circumstances, but I can assure you that I felt and thought myself a very superior sort of being. I held myself very erect as I walked down the Strand on my way to my office.

Perhaps it might even be said that I "strutted." I don't know, certainly. I believe that I blindly walked into several persons. I have an indistinct notion of apologising more than once.

At any rate, I am confident that I was excusable under the circumstances. A man feels such sensations as I was experiencing only once in a life time. This was my turn at happiness, as it were.

I remember that I walked that morning because I felt compelled. I started in a 'bus, but abandoned the stuffy vehicle after a few yards. I could not endure confinement at such a time. You see, I was so happy. And yet, when I look back upon that moment now, and view my situation critically, I see that had I been perfectly sane, I must have realised that I was actually in a serious predicament.

I had asked Beatrice to marry me, and she had accepted in a dainty little note which greeted me at breakfast.

It had been a most foolhardy piece of presumption on my part to propose to her, for the reason that I often found it difficult to pay my own bills. How then could I meet even the expense of feeding and clothing a handsome woman accustomed to the good things of life—to say nothing of providing for the possibilities of the future?

I had known Beatrice for only a few months, but with me it had been love at first sight. I had devoted all of my spare time and most of my cash to the gratification of her little desires. I paid her marked attention, and, before long, became satisfied that she was not indifferent to my suit.

Discretion whispered to me to wait until I had built my dove cot before catching the dove, but love shrieked in my ears day and night: "Take her now or you will lose her." This seemed quite possible, for she was constantly surrounded by an admiring circle of men wherever she went.

My final proposing had been precipitated the night before by a streak of jealousy which overtook me whilst at the opera. I had bought a box, at considerable pecuniary sacrifice, and she and her mother had accompanied me. Much to my disgust, several men dropped in to visit, and remained to converse.

One man, who posed in society as a German count, particularly annoyed me. He monopolised Beatrice as though she were his personal property. Worse than that, she seemed quite willing for him to do so. I think, now, that this was but a feminine trick to make me anxious, and so hurry the crisis.

At least, it accomplished that result, for I left the box, obtained writing materials, and penned a formal proposal of marriage, which I slipped into her hand at parting. The result was the afore-mentioned note of acceptance, and the coincident happiness that this morning had already reached the pitch where I longed for a confidant.

It was in this frame of mind that I entered the building wherein I occupied a suite of two small rooms, upon the door of which appeared my name.

As I stood waiting for the lift, I mechanically allowed my eyes to run down a list of names of the other occupants. Suddenly my attention was arrested by one which seemed quite familiar—that of Andrew Manning. I had known a man by that name at Oxford, where we had been close friends. Then he went abroad and I had never seen him since.

On the way up I spoke to the lift boy, and my curiosity was whetted. From his account it seemed that this Andrew Manning not only had his business offices in the building, but had taken a large suite there, where he lived in bachelor style.

I at once sought his rooms. The office door was still locked, but upon wringing the bell of the next door, I was received by a servant, who, in response to my inquiries, said that Mr. Manning had gone out to breakfast, but would soon return.

Upon expressing a wish to wait, I was ushered into a really cosy apartment, which at first impressed me as the most luxuriously comfortable little box that I had ever entered. The next moment I experienced a sensation of oddity in my surroundings, the cause of which I was at a loss to name, as everything seemed so entirely in keeping with everything else that there was no incongruity. Yet there was an unconventionality about that assailed the senses.

At length I discovered the primary cause. The walls, ceiling, and carpet were black. The latter, upon closer scrutiny, I found was not a solid black, as it appeared, but a black background into which figures were interwoven in dark blue. The effect was very rich. The walls were covered with jet-black cartridge paper, but this was relieved at intervals by small *fluer-de-lis* in burnished blue steel.

The ceiling was covered with the same paper, studded

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with silver stars, arranged exactly as are the constellations in the heavens. In one corner was a crescent moon, which could be illuminated with electricity so as to light the room at night. A few of the planets could also to be made to serve as electric lamps.

The sombreness which would ordinarily prevail in such a room was entirely obviated by the furnishings. Rich Dagnestan rugs and heavy silk Oriental portières in warm colours, partly lightened up the prevailing blackness, whilst the walls were so covered with pictures in gilded frames that the papering served only to heighten the general effect. The furniture was all in bright though not gaudy colours. After taking in my surroundings in a general view, I began to walk round for closer inspection of the pictures, many of which I found to be rare gems. Presently I stopped before a frame which excited my curiosity to the utmost. Whereas the other pictures had all been paintings in water colour, or in oil, this was merely a photograph, a portrait of a woman. That much I could discern, though I could not see the features.

What riveted my attention was this. The photograph was cabinet size, placed in rather a large frame, surrounded by a wide mat. Covering the picture entirely was a black veil, folded several times and fastened to the glass at each corner by a red seal. This arrangement in itself was curious enough, but the mystery was heightened by the fact that a small gold hook had been driven into the upper edge of the frame, and that from this hook was suspended a bit of blue ribbon, at each end of which was attached a solitare diamond ring.

What could it mean? I had barely asked myself the question when a footstep in the adjoining room warned me that Manning had returned. Reflecting that after all it might not be my friend, and that, in any event, it would not be pleasant to be caught in front of a picture so suggestive of a secret history, probably of a personal character, I hastily stepped across the floor and dropped into a chair.

The next moment Manning entered, and, though changed, I at once recognised him as my old college chum. I arose and greeted him effusively, as was natural in my happy fame of mind. He took my hand cordially, remembering me also, but his manner was by no means demonstrative.

On the contrary, I detected a certain reserve, a sort of dignified quietness of speech, which at first jarred upon me. Indeed, I felt almost as though I had made a mistake in calling and that my old friend was not overjoyed in renewing my acquaintance. In this, however, I was entirely wrong, for upon my attempting to depart he peremptorily insisted upon my remaining to talk over old times.

After that we became almost chummy—at least, I did, though he still exhibited that phlegmatism which was so foreign to his character, as I recalled it. Finally, in spite of this reserve, I began to feel so much at home with him that I ventured to direct the conversation to the veiled picture.

"I suppose, Andrew," said I, "you must have trave'led in many countries since we last met; you have brought home such a number of curios from foreign climes."

"Another evidence, my friend," he replied, "of a poor deduction from good premises. Most of the pictures and *bric-à-brac* about this room attest a personal collection in many countries. But there their value as evidence ceases. I did not collect them myself; I simply inherited them."

"Inherited them?" I asked. "Why, none of your family have died, I hope?"

"No but a very dear friend. You may even remember him. He was at Oxford with us a short time—Julius Kraig!"

"Not the tall blonde fellow who was crazy on the subject of music?"

"The same. He went abroad immediately after graduation, and travelled everywhere. I eventually met him in Paris. We became great friends, and remained so till he died."

"What a pity that he should have died so young; for though we used to guy him I always thought that he had the seeds of genius in him." Here I determined to venture upon a bold stroke. "But tell me, Manning, why do you drape his picture with crepe?"

"How do you mean? Oh, I see! You have been looking round my room and allude to the veiled picture. You are wrong. That is not Kraig's portrait, though the crepe, as you term it, is there as a memento of him."

"In what way? I do not understand."

"My dear fellow, you have unwittingly touched upon a subject which is very painful to me; one upon which I seldom speak. But you are my old college chum, and I see that, unlike myself, you have retained your youth. I will tell you the story of that picture if you wish, but I warn you that it might be better for you not to hear it."

"Why? How can it affect me?"

"By shattering some of your ideals. By affecting your faith in human kind. Shall I tell you?"

"If you please!" I was too anxious to hear the story to hesitate for such a seeming trifle.

"That you may fully comprehend the strange tale," began Manning, "I must first tell you something about Kraig. As you have admitted, he was a genius. A greater musical genius than his never lived, perhaps, and yet he died without fame, almost unknown! I became very intimate with him shortly after reaching Paris. He had a bachelor suite on the Rue de la Paix. His principal room, a combination of dining-room, smoking-room and study, was fitted up exactly as this one is, with the exception of that picture which is veiled. Even the wall paper and ceiling I brought over with me."

He paused, and I stared about with renewed interest in my surroundings. I began almost to feel that it was uncanny, this scheme of inheriting a man's belongings, and perpetuating his living-rooms to such an extent as Manning had done. One could almost fancy that, if such things can be, Kraig's ghost would be about the place.

"Kraig had an odd theory about music," resumed Manning. "His idea was like this. A man is an embodied spirit. Thought is an attribute of the spiritual man. Language is, as it were, thought materialised: a necessary form of transmitting thought, essential to the physical man, but not used at all by spirits. In simpler language articulate words are used by physical man to convey his thoughts to other physical men.

"Some thinkers claim that the spirit not only abandons words, but does not even employ any form of sound to convey thought. Kraig counted this a gross error. He argued that if a spirit could conceive the thought of another spirit, clairvoyantly, magnetically, or in any manner which would exclude the will power of the thinker, it would be manifest at once that thought would be useless, since it would be universally known as soon as conceived. Or, at least, spirits would cease to exist

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as separate individuals, and must necessarily combine as a single mind. Such a theory would destroy utterly our preconceived notions of immortality. The individual would no longer exist as an individual, and at death would simply be swallowed up by this one great spirit mind. This idea is abhorrent to us. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly, thus far," I replied.

"Very well. The next step is to explain Kraig's notion of the transmission of thought in the spiritual world. This is accomplished, he believed, by means of music."

"By music? How ridiculous! Then the angels would all sing to each other."

"Exactly so; but remember, they would not sing words. Words belong to the material sphere. Kraig claimed, with much reason, that the spiritual is present in man, the animal, since man thinks and gives expression to his thoughts. This he does in two ways—by spoken words, the material method; and by music, the spiritual method."

"I don't quite grasp that," I objected.

"Yet it is perfectly simple. Your composer of music is merely a man who thinks out his ideas, and sets them down in musical tones instead of in words. This truth, of course, has not yet been grasped by the multitude, but it is only like the many others that we pass by, because they are so constantly present with us that we do not observe them."

Kraig then argued thus: "Here are two methods of conveying thought-spoken words and music. By the mathematical axiom, 'things equal to the same thing must be equal to one another.' Consequently for every word in a language there must be an exact equivalent in a musical tone, since each represents a thought. The converse is not true, however, for the reason that the language of words is very incomplete, many fine shadings of thought being so incommunicable in one language, that we are forced constantly to borrow from others to meet our wants. Even the sum of all the languages of the earth cannot express thought as accurately as can music, for there must be as many variations of a musical tone as there can be conceivable phases of thought. Thus the spiritual transcends the material."

"But granting all this, to what does it lead?"

"It led Kraig to a wonderful invention. He explained to me that whilst there could be no accurate equivalent of all musical tones in spoken words, at the same time it is quite possible that music composed by a material man would so differ from true spiritual music that, whilst the latter would not be transcribable to human tongue, the former, probably, would contain no ideas that could not be translated into words. This, because the mind in its material environment would not think in music much beyond what the tongue could not express in words. Do you get that?"

"Perfectly."

"Kraig's hope was to invent a new musical instrument which would accurately translate music. To be more explicit, his instrument when played upon would respond, not in ordinary tones, as does the piano, harp, or violin, but in actual spoken words, which words would be the equivalent in thought of the musical tones of the composition. In other words, the instrument, played upon like a piano, would respond somewhat as though a human voice were singing. Thus we should have spoken words and musical tones blended in a single expression of thought. Was not that a grand idea?"

"It sounds like insanity to me," I said dubiously.

"And to me, also, at first. Finally, however, I accepted the whole theory, but endeavoured to discourage Kraig from attempting the impossible. He would listen to my argument and shrug his shoulders with a smile, saying, 'Nothing is impossible. Man may accomplish what he wills! If it is conceivable in thought it is possible! The impossible cannot be conceived. The only difficulty is that the material man may wear out before the spiritual accomplishes his purpose. This, however, is no argument against endeavour, for what is unfinished in this life may be completed in another. We will begin where we left off. So all progress counts in the total sum.'

"Thus, you see, it was not easy to prevent Kraig from pursuing his hobby. Now I come to the story of the picture."

Manning paused a moment, but I remained silent. Presently he began again:

"In Paris I met and loved a beautiful girl. To make this part of my tale brief, I will only say that after a few months' acquaintance I was made excessively happy by her accepting me as her future husband. At the time, I had not seen Kraig for several days. I had never spoken to him of my love, because he always seemed so wrapped up in his music that all other topics of conversation were excluded. It was three days after my engagement when I walked up the stairs that led to Kraig's apartments. I had become so intimate that I did not even knock, but turning the door handle I entered the room—the room which was like this.

"Kraig was not there, but before I could look for him elsewhere I observed a new piece of furniture. It looked like a piano, and yet it was dissimilar, too, being like an upright piano, but double the usual length. Like a flash it dawned upon me that this was Kraig's new instrument. I advanced to examine it, and, raising the lid, I noted the white ivory keys. There were no black ones. My curiosity was at once so great I could not wait for Kraig's return. I was possessed with the desire to hear this instrument sing. I may say sing, because I have no other word that will express it. An evidence, you see of the poverty of language. I touched a key and produced a prolonged 'Oh-h-h,' which was so like grief that I released the note quickly. I glanced round in search of some music, and observed a freshly written manuscript lying upon Kraig's desk. This, evidently, was a composition made expressly for the new instrument. I took it with supppessed excitement, and with trembling fingers I began to play."

"Well?" I asked excitedly, as Manning paused. I was now thoroughly aroused by his weird tale.

"My friend," he continued, "I hope that you will never experience the agony that was mine during the next few minutes. As soon as I pressed the notes indicated in the manuscript, a voice as from another world spoke, or sang, or chanted—what you will; no words can describe it. It was a combination of musical tones of supremest purity with words in English. There was the only incongruity of discord.

"The harsh gutturals of our language sounded out of place, and yet they told a sad tale that has been burnt into my brain.

"I will repeat the words to you. The composition was entitled 'The Wail of a Broken Heart.' The music began in a monotonous but melodious chant, and the opening stanzas were devoted to an impassioned defence of the constancy of men, whose love, so the poet-musician declared, was no less often betrayed than was

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that of women. Then, leaping from the general to the particular the chant continued:

'This I know, that I, myself,
Am just that doting fool that trusted all to one.
She came into my life but five short months ago,
Yet in that brief, sweet space of time, I've dreamed of joy
So great that I have pitied those in Paradise,
Who die unhallowed by such love as I thought mine!

'In these fantastic visions I have seen myself
By emp'rors crowned. In fancy have been hailed
Music's greatest master! Musician, world-renowned!

'But dearer yet than emp'ror's crown, within my heart
I prized the smile of love upon my sweetheart's lips;
For she it was whose sacred love had aided me.
To reach the pinnacle of fame. But these were dreams!'

"Here the melody changed, this time wailing out in mournful cadences the story of how, an hour before, all the composer's hopes had been dispelled by a brief note from the woman he had worshipped.

''Twas thus she wrote: "Forgive me, love!" What mockery
To use that word! "But I must tell the truth. Alas!
I have deceived thee. My love cannot enrich thy life!
I think I have no love—no heart—but in its stead
Ambition stirs my soul. To share thy fame I would
Have joined my life to thine. But I have changed my mind,
And now give all for wealth, which hath the mystic pow'r
To buy whate'er the heart may crave, including fame,
And love, perchance. And so I sell my love for gold!
For wealth I sell myself—and thee! Farewell! Forgive!"

'O God! that one so fair in form should be so foul
In soul! Ah! well! 'Tis over! Ended! Done! But——'

"Here the voice ceased, for the composition had never been completed. By an odd chance, however, I once more rested my hands upon the keys, absorbed amidst a riot of thoughts, when, to my horror, the voice again was heard, a terrifying shriek, ending in a prolonged moan, as from a soul in purgatory. I quickly lifted my hands, and silence reigned. At length this became so oppressive, that I hurried from the room in search of Kraig."

Manning was silent a moment or two, overcome by the emotions aroused by the recollection of the scene which he had depicted.

"I found him in his bedroom," he continued. "He lay prone on the floor, with blood oozing from his mouth. I hastened to him, but he was already dead. A post-mortem became necessary, and it was discovered that the heart muscle had actually been ruptured. He had literally died of a broken heart. I found in his tightly closed hand a copy of the letter referred to in the music. The words were identically the same, so you see how accurately he had transcribed his thoughts into musical composition, and how admirably his instrument had portrayed his emotions as well as his music. The greatest shock to me was yet to come. I found the envelope in which the note had been inclosed, and within it was a diamond ring, one of those now hanging from the ribbon. The inscription gave the name of the girl who had thus rudely sundered her engagement and killed my friend."

"Well?" I muttered, half expecting what he would say.

"Oh, I read there the name of the woman to whom I was engaged, that is all."

He left his seat abruptly, and went to the window, with a low, empty laugh, which made my heart turn chill. I sat silent, with a portentious feeling of some impending evil. I deeply regretted that I had tempted him into this recital. Now, I understood it all. The veiled picture was that woman's portrait. The two rings were her two engagement tokens, presented to her by Kraig and Manning. Presently he turned and came towards me. Standing near me, he continued with perfect control of his voice, and in that phlegmatic tone which now I comprehended—he had learnt self-repression.

"You see," he went on, "poor Kraig, upon receiving that cruel letter, had evidently tried to drown his sorrow in his music. His great instrument had just been completed. Fame was within his grasp when this blow which slew his love came upon him. With indomitable will he at once realised that, while his heart was so stirred, he might, perhaps, compose a masterpiece. So he sat down to write his own sad story in that spirit language, music. It was a master stroke of spirit over matter. His will would surmount the pain that a woman had caused him. Alas! Poor man! Even in the midst of this grand effort of the spirit to show its supremacy, the link that bound his soul to this earth was rudely snapped—his material self ceased to exist. The shock had broken his heart, and so his beautiful spirit was released.

"But I? I was still alive to face precisely the agony which he had thus escaped. The same note which told him that the woman would have married him for his fame, confessed that she accepted me for my wealth. Of course that ended all. I covered her face with the veil, and hung the two rings where you see them. I took Kraig's things and brought them here. His rooms I have reproduced, as you see; and because I wish to live alone, I have done the eccentric thing of making my home in an office building, away from the regular dwellings of the city. A morbid fancy, if you wish to consider it so. As to the wonderful instrument, that was injured on the way over, and was dumb when I opened it. Kraig being dead, there was none who could restore it."

"But what became of the girl?" I asked thoughtlessly.

"I do not know," he said absently. "To me Beatrice is dead!"

"Beatrice?" I asked with sudden surprise. "Did you say Beatrice?"

"Did I?" he asked, still dreamily. "I don't know. Perhaps I did. It was her name. Beatrice Alden."

No sooner had the words fallen from his lips than I started to my feet and rushed from the room. He tried to stay my flight, alarmed, I suppose, by my appearance; but I eluded him and rushed down the stairs and out of the building, never heeding where I went. All I knew was that my happiness had suddenly ceased.

For hours I wandered about the streets like one crazed. When he told me this that she—that woman who had been death to poor Kraig and misery to himself—that she was Beatrice Alden, my Beatrice, the pain at my heart was so keen that I would cheerfully have accepted surcease by sharing Kraig's fate.

At last one ray of hope penetrated to my heart. She had accepted Kraig for his fame, and Manning for his wealth. Why had she accepted me? I have neither genius with which to win fame, nor that wealth which she counts so potent. For love? Why else? Then after all, is not love the greatest power, and has not her heart at last been found by me? Then why not accept the situation, forget this horrible tale, and marry Beatrice?

What would you do in my place?

R. Ottolengui.

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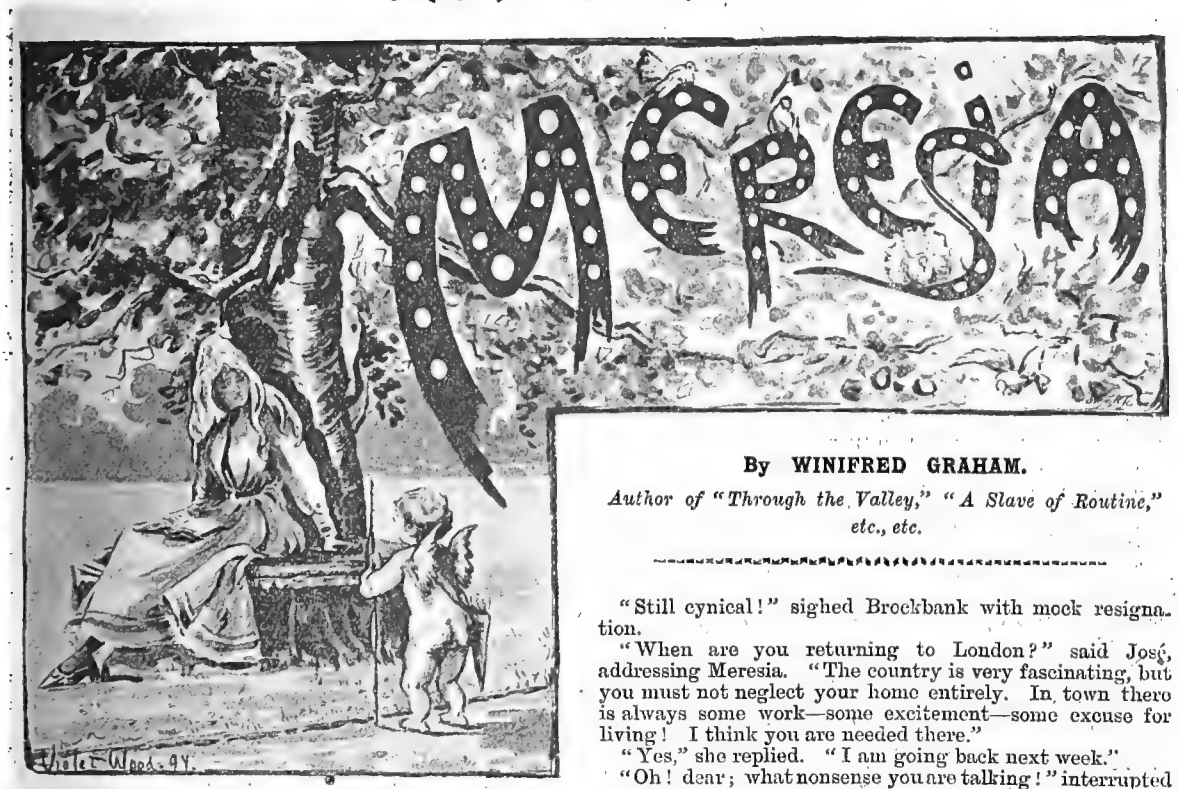

By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "Through the Valley," "A Slave of Routine," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

I Hold Your Life!

Meresia could get no more conversation alone with José. She noticed he avoided her, and though longing to question him, she still dreaded to hear the worst, and half-welcomed delay.

On Sunday he left, summoned, he said, by letter that morning, to a patient. Herbert Brockbank offered to return with his friend, but the Milfords would not hear of this.

"We certainly cannot spare you before Monday," they said, "if you can endure our country dullness until then."

He accepted their invitation with alacrity, and showed scant disappointment at José's departure.

If Meresia looked troubled, the Doctor made no great contrast to her. He wore the air of an over-worked man—one who has thought deep thoughts and remembered them, and his face had aged considerably since the death of Alfonso Aladros. The boyishness which Bertie Haydon had been frequently privileged to witness was now entirely absent, and fresh lines made themselves visible on José's face.

As he bade Meresia good-bye, few would have taken him for a successful, affluent man.

He was thinner, paler, and bitterer even than in the dark days of his gaoler's life in Madrid.

"You might have the weight of the universe on your shoulders, old man!" said Herbert Brockbank. "I hope it is nothing very serious that calls you back to town?"

"Only the matter of a life in danger—one life is not of much consequence among the millions and millions, is it, Mrs. Aladros?"

He turned to Meresia, who stood by the open door, waiting while his luggage was brought down.

She made no reply, but the colour rushed to her face, and she raised her head as if at an insult.

"Still cynical!" sighed Brockbank with mock resignation.

"When are you returning to London?" said José, addressing Meresia. "The country is very fascinating, but you must not neglect your home entirely. In town there is always some work—some excitement—some excuse for living! I think you are needed there."

"Yes," she replied. "I am going back next week."

"Oh! dear; what nonsense you are talking!" interrupted Mrs. Milford. "I certainly cannot spare you yet, Meresia. Really, Doctor, your bad advice is quite demoralising. She had promised to stay another month at least with us. What attractions can London have for her now, poor darling?"

"Mrs. Aladros has a restless spirit—let her be! Besides, she most kindly accepted a little invitation for next week—only tea at my house with a few favoured friends, Haydon, Miss James, and three or four others. Don't fail to come," turning to Meresia, "I shall expect you on Tuesday at four o'clock!"

It was the first she had heard of the invitation, and guessed this to be merely his way of arranging the meeting of which he had spoken the night before, and as a means of enabling her to return without comment.

Her voice faltered slightly as she replied:

"Yes, I will be punctual—for once!"

Then the carriage drove the Doctor away, leaving her standing hatless on the doorstep beside Herbert Brockbank.

The sun had just come out after a heavy shower, and caught the rich colour of her hair—the trees and the grass sparkled and glistened, decked by thousands of unsubstantial brilliants.

She felt like a skeleton fresh risen from its grave, as she stood in the warm glow. What right had she to be there, in the very heart of living creation? By all the laws of the land she ought long ago to have found a resting place with the shamed and degraded!

Herbert Brockbank smiled as the carriage turned the corner of the drive. He had elected to look upon José as his rival with Meresia, and the absence of a rival is always pleasurable.

"If Serano is to have you on Tuesday," he said, "I, at least, am the more fortunate till Monday. Perhaps you will let me call on you—in London?"

"I don't think I shall stay," replied Meresia; "the house is so empty, desolate, and frightening now that I am alone. I suppose a man cannot realise a woman's horror of being

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left by herself in a house wholly associated in her mind with death, and one dead. It is like living in a tomb."

"I think I understand something of that feeling. Then you will only be in town for one night—only on Tuesday?"

"Ah, Tuesday!" she murmured with a little shudder.

"You don't want to go," he said. "Serano has worried you into it. Why not change your mind?"

Meresia shook her head.

"Ah!" thought the man, "she will not disappoint Serano." Then he said aloud;

"I have not been honoured with an invitation to this tea-party. Serano kindly put me up for a day or two during some alterations that were being done to my rooms, but I am to return to them to-morrow."

"Then I shall not see you, unless you care to call on the chance of finding me in on Wednesday afternoon. I will give you my address."

He eagerly accepted this small advance, and was convinced that the reason Serano had so pointedly left him out of Tuesday's invitation was the jealous fear that he had found favour in the eyes of Mrs. Aladros. He could see that Meresia had something on her mind from repeated little vagaries throughout the day, and the haziness of her conversation.

But she bore these minor trials with a quiet consideration and respectful tenderness that, coming from a comparative stranger, touched Meresia deeply. Her suspense was not so selfish but that she saw and appreciated such little things.

A certain sympathy, wordless, but existing nevertheless, sprang up between them. Meresia no longer felt her way towards this new acquaintance, but established a footing of friendliness that raised him to a seventh heaven of delight.

The following day she took leave of her parents, amid protestations from both, and travelled to town by the same train as Herbert Brockbank—for that he blessed Serano's tea party. At least it gave him a few more hours of her society.

The house felt terribly deserted as Meresia entered it, and met again the various objects that reminded her of the dead. They seemed to obtrude themselves at every corner with offensive persistency, and in the faces of her servants, and all whom she met, she fancied she detected suspicion!

Years of anxiety had elapsed since Saturday night, years of suspense and misery rolled into two days. One more night of restless tossing, and then she would know something at least of her fate! She dared not send for Elizabeth as consoler. Alas! she had cut herself adrift from consolation! Elizabeth was far-seeing, shrewd, observant; she would know at once that something was wrong, and perhaps press for explanations. So in friendless agony the hours passed, the night dragged its weary watches to the dawn, the morning waned into afternoon, and Meresia found herself at the appointed time asking for Dr. Serano.

No sign of the friends he had mentioned. It was as she had foretold.

The servant showed her to José's private study, where he was waiting. His eyes looked heavy, and he held an envelope—large and bulky in his hand, sealed with a huge seal, and addressed.

As the door closed, Meresia sank into the nearest chair, giddy from nervous exhaustion.

José did not speak till she had recovered her composure.

"I hope," he said, "I did not frighten you——"

"Then your hope is far from the mark! I have never spent two days more miserably on earth—they were worse than those first days, for then I hardly realised my position."

"No, but now I want you to realise it fully. You understand that I helped you, not because you desired to be free, but to revenge a community for which I would give my heart's blood. I work in the interest of a wronged and down-trodden people. I do not consider myself, or I should never have let you poison your husband, for in so doing I perjured my soul. I gave that with the rest, and I did not give it lightly, nor without a struggle. But we will not discuss the right or the wrong of it—that's over now, for a season. But one thing I must make clear; I need a service at your hands, and I ask you to do it without comment or discussion!"

"What service?"

"Merely to make yourself my messenger. You see this packet; it must be delivered by hand to the man to whom it is addressed, and the person that delivers it must bring back a reply. It is of vital importance to a great number of people. You are the only person I can trust."

He handed her the large sealed envelope. She looked at the address.

"But this is in Madrid," she said.

"Certainly, and to Madrid you must go. That was what I meant when I told you that you might have to leave England this week. Your visit need only be a short one, and your excuse—a desire to see the home of your dead husband. This helps you in your pose of distressed widow, and I have privately warned your parents to thwart you in nothing."

Meresia flung the packet angrily upon his desk. Her bright green eyes were ablaze now, her lips quivered indignantly.

"So it is for this you have made me suffer, and think myself suspected, lost, for this—servant's work! I am not your messenger, Dr. Serano—to be ordered here and there—and I refuse to go to Madrid. Now, if you have insulted me enough, I should be glad to end our interview."

She moved towards the door.

"Stop! you are in too great a hurry, Mrs. Aladros! You talk of being suspected; you have no fear of being betrayed. You forget that I have the means of forcing you to do my will, you ignore the fact that your rash action has put you in my power—that I hold your life, your honour in my hand. God knows that I am no villain wishing to trade on that power, but I think I desire some service in repayment."

"You talk as if you had nothing to do with my crime."

"Had I? Did you not poison your husband of your own free will? And if I gave you that poison, who would believe your story against mine? I have won for myself a position that men are kind enough to call unimpeachable. Your husband was my friend—my helper. If I say to the world certain actions since my friend's death on the part of his widow have aroused my suspicions so deeply that I must take steps to satisfy myself, do you think the world would prevent me exhuming your husband's body? Then I could show that there was poison in the body, and if you said: 'Yes, but Dr. Serano gave it me,' you would acknowledge the crime. I think, too, that a jury would conclude that I, for my part, should have let the dead lie, had the poison been procured by me. But these are gruesome subjects to discuss, and I neither wish to alarm or annoy you. I would much rather you did my bidding quietly and reasonably; it will save an infinity of trouble."

The bald facts he had revealed, and his immovable face, cowed Meresia! Her woman's heart failed; she took back the packet nervously, turning it over and over in her fingers, and trembling as she stood.

"When must I go?" she asked.

"As soon as possible, say, in three or four days; I will make everything easy for you. I can provide you with a courier who is thoroughly trustworthy, but I dare not let him take these papers, for fear he should lose them, or leave them about to be stolen."

Meresia held the envelope away from her, and looked at it with overwhelming fear, and an awful apprehension.

"Is it some conspiracy?" she whispered. "Will it do harm or good?"

"From my point of view, it must do good," replied Serano. "But don't, please, ask questions. It is so much better for yourself not to know. Be assured you are not

personally, running any risk; your ignorance is your protection! The papers inclosed are written in Spanish—you would not understand them."

"So I am not allowed a point of view," she replied. "You are treating me very unfairly, very cruelly, and I am sorry to have fallen into your net—sorry to be your tool. I am going against my will, because the man is naturally stronger, and a woman cannot fight, unfortunately, such odds alone!"

"You might have paid a worse penalty for your crime," he said. "I did for you what no other living man would have done. I explained away the causes of death satisfactorily, I avoided an inquest. You might have procured the poison elsewhere, but not the doctor!"

She felt the truth of his words, but she was too angry and sore to acknowledge them, for she hated this mysterious mission; this working in the dark like a mere machine, guided by José Serano.

He offered her his hand, but she refused it, and left him in silence, with the envelope hidden under a light cape of some flimsy material.

Out in the London streets the town birds were playing at spring, but it was a poor imitation after country fare! Flowers cut and quickly fading, bloomed in the dust from dirty baskets, and were sold by grimy fingers. Their gaudy coloured counterfeits glared from the shop windows, and reared brazen heads in the hats and bonnets of passing women-kind, while the sun filtered through the smoke and showed the dirt on everything.

José watched Meresia drive away, then turned from the open window and rested his forehead in his hands.

"I've cowed a woman with threats," he said, "wretch that I am!" Then he reflected, and added with conviction: "For the sake of the injured I destroyed my soul; for the sake of the downtrodden she must work and obey. It is the inevitable law of balance, and Meresia Aladros cannot be spared!"

Mistaken or not, José Serano was at least in earnest, and for this, much shall hereafter be forgiven.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Storm and Stress.

Herbert Brockbank found Meresia in, alone. It was Wednesday afternoon. She welcomed his presence gladly, for solitude only deepened and aggravated her depression and resentment against José.

Half unconsciously, the knowledge that this stranger, who had so suddenly become a friend, cared for her—more than the care of passing admiration and the love of the eyes—dawned on the woman. It thrilled her with a new and maddening terror; it was a phase she had not bargained for when she murdered Aladros.

Love she had put aside as a thing apart from her life, but now the inevitable yearnings of her youth for sympathy and companionship rose to wage war with the bitterness that held sway. How could she ever give or receive affection from another man when the past, with its errors, its bloodshed, followed her on—on—and condemned her!

"Did you go to Serano's yesterday?" he asked.

"Yes." Her lips contracted slightly as she answered him.

"Who was there?"

She hesitated, then replied boldly: "No one, the party was a fraud. He wished to see me about another matter, something of importance."

The mind naturally turns to the worst conclusion, and Herbert Brockbank thought at once that the subject of importance which Serano needed to discuss alone with Mrs. Aladros was one of a sentimental nature. Had not José tried to put him off with sneering words and vague warnings—a ruse to clear his own path?

Meresia noticed his vexation, but little guessed the cause. Their talk grew stilted, meaningless, and a gloom fell on both.

"Are you staying in London or returning to the country?" he asked in a desultory sort of way.

"Neither; I am going to Spain."

"To Spain!" he ejaculated, and his fears deepened. Undoubtedly it was as he suspected.

"Only for a flying visit—a whim," she assured him with forced smiles. "I have a desire to see my husband's home in Madrid. It is the outcome of a restless spirit, and Dr. Serano advises, in fact, orders me to go."

"Ah! then you paid him a professional visit; it was on the subject of your health he wished to see you?"

Meresia hesitated to frame the untruth in words, so compromised, after the fashion of the world, by nodding assent.

Herbert Brockbank breathed more freely, but his jealousy now rankled against the dead husband to whose home Meresia was about to journey.

"I suppose you have always had a passionate longing to see Spain?" he queried.

"No," Meresia answered; and there was something fierce, something stifled in her tone. "I am obliged to go on business."

"But you said just now——"

"Oh! yes—yes; I say many things when I talk that I don't quite mean; I say them without thinking; it is a habit I suppose. I felt it might be pleasanter to pretend I was going for pleasure; but somehow, though I have only known you a few days, you make it difficult for me to pretend."

"That is one of the kindest things you could have said," he answered. "But can no one else attend to your affairs in Madrid, and save you unnecessary trouble?"

She shook her head.

"Trouble is always necessary, or we should never take it," she said. "It forces itself upon us, or is forced by other people. If we are strong we may master the enemy, if we are weak we fall, and obey these tiresome orders of fate and circumstance. I am one of the weaklings, so I consent to be driven, and by a tight rein. But you will think I am talking nonsense—at random—you will laugh at me!"

"On the contrary, I would give worlds to help you."

He spoke with the whole energy of his nature, aspiring to an unreserved intimacy, and waiting for Meresia to answer in the breathless expectancy of intense enthusiasm.

But the secret weight of her hidden cares oppressed Mrs. Aladros and deadened her faculties, while every spring of action relaxed. She leant back in her chair feeling limp and nerveless, while the load on her heart pressed even heavier than before.

If she could have taken this man into her confidence and told him all; if she could have trusted anyone with her fearful secret, the burden might have been lightened. But she could neither ask advice nor seek comfort, and the vision of the dreaded journey came back with tantalising clearness before her eyes. Again she felt insulted, ill-used, trapped by the Spanish doctor.

"You are very good," she said simply, with a little gesture of her hand towards Herbert Brockbank. "But you cannot help me. Believe me when I tell you that I am a most miserable woman, but no one on earth can release me from my misery. So far I have confided to you, in owning that, more than I've told my nearest or my dearest. For the rest of my life I must walk alone, and suffer in silence."

Her head bent low, so that he could not see her eyes. The picture of her grief gave him courage—he drew nearer.

"Why alone? And must you suffer—always."

"Yes, always."

"Then let me share your sufferings—give me at least some part in it—some place."

Her eyes were still downcast, for the passion in his voice shook her control. She tried to answer calmly.

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"But, as a rule, people are not so anxious to suffer."

"I love you," he said slowly, "is that not reason enough?"

Meresia turned cold, for the isolation of her life confronted her. What would his love change to if the mask could be laid aside, and her thoughts revealed? If he could know her sin, would he still say: "I love you!" would that still be reason enough?

A morbid insensibility crept over Meresia, momentarily calming the sharp pain produced by his words. It was an unnatural state of mind—this sudden halting of emotion—a violence on its powers and energies!

"I am fettered—hemmed in," she said at last. "I can give no love and take no love."

Her words sounded hard and feelingless; to the man they came as a blow, though he had half expected them.

"Forgive me," he said; "I ought not to have spoken yet. I said what I thought aloud, hardly realising you would hear and answer me. I could not help myself. Perhaps some day—when time has made the way easier, when you can forget the sorrows, the losses of the past—you will listen to me again—you will let me repeat what I ought not to have said to-day."

Meresia saved herself with an effort from acting on the impulse of the moment, and deliberated. The situation required a caution and reserve to which she had never before been called.

She looked up at him with infinite tenderness in her eyes, and, as he returned the glance, she felt that this—this alone—was the real, the great tragedy of her life.

All she had endured since the death of her husband could not compare to this sudden finding and losing of joy. The warm glow of new sentiments, new anticipations, and then the cold formality of her forced reply:

"There is nothing to forgive, but now or in ten years' time it will be the same. There can be no happy end for me. I have lived in vain. I have missed the mark. If I suffer, you cannot share my suffering. Women, you know"—turning away with a little catch in her voice—"have a special gift for enduring pain."

"What is it that stands between us? Only tell me, only trust me, and I will break it down. Meresia, dear, if I thought you could ever care, nothing should bar the way. Can't you see I'm desperate? Have you ever tried to limit love, to measure it's breadth and depth? For the sake of love, suffering itself is welcome; through good or evil, love, the real, the true, will stand! Only test mine, give it a trial; that is so little to ask, after all. I will go away to wait in silence. I will do anything you tell me for a word of hope."

Meresia shrank from his pleading with a kind of terror. She thought of herself as a creature depraved, shunned alike by men and women. Her conscience rose up to convict her. "This is your penalty," it said, and seemed to take the voices of powerful and malignant spirits, which whispered of punishment here and hereafter.

"Oh! no, no, no," she gasped, half addressing herself to the man, half warding away the unseen tormentors of her tortured brain. "I cannot listen, I cannot hope, I cannot tell, it is all mystery and misery. Don't let me blight your life," rising, and taking Herbert Brockbank's hand in her trembling ones. "I've done enough harm without that. You must not see me again, you must not indeed."

He held the hands she gave him long and fervently, looking into her eyes, and marvelling at the sweetness, and the beauty, of her pale, passionate face.

What could it mean but that she loved him, those tear-stained lashes and trembling lips? But she was overwrought, and some exaggerated care made a difficulty which the man was determined to conquer.

Now he saw she was weak and overwrought, so he left her obediently, with a few soft words that lingered long in her mind, and made the parting harder for Meresia.

She felt at last that she was capable of passionate and all-absorbing love, a love self-sacrificing and devoted. But a strong sense of honour and duty towards the man who had brought this feeling into existence made her determine to crush it, and see him no more.

For a while she sat motionless, wondering what would happen next. This new complication was so unexpected that Meresia felt prepared for anything. That her heart should have gone out with a sudden wild yearning—to Herbert Brockbank of all men—a mere passer-by upon life's stream—a ship sighted in the night—amazed her. But the harbour must be left, forgotten, and the rough seas faced; the waves that would toss and beat till the end of her little span, only to waft her on into the deeper waters of eternity.

The light was fading, and a servant came in with a lamp.

"If you please, ma'am, there is a man downstairs asking to see you."

"What sort of a man? Who is he?"

"A servant of Dr. Serano's, I fancy, ma'am. He said something about an accident."

Meresia waited to hear no more. She flew quickly out of the room and down the stairs.

"Where is he?" she asked, but before the answer came Mrs. Aladros had reached the hall, where a man in livery was waiting.

"If you please, madam," he said, "will you come at once to Dr. Serano? He has been thrown from his carriage—the horses ran away down Piccadilly, and the master is badly, we fear fatally injured. There are two doctors with him, and one of them sent me here to say he had asked to see you."

Meresia listened with a certain apathy to the words—hardly comprehending them, and yet it seemed that some intuition had told her of this before, as she sat alone after her lover's departure. She experienced no surprise, no shock; it seemed a natural event, instead of a startling calamity.

"Bring me a hat and cloak quickly," she said to the maid, and, turning to the man, "call a hansom, please."

"There is one waiting," he replied.

A moment later she was driving at great speed through the London streets. The lamps, which were just being lit, danced before her eyes, and the rush and roar of many waters sounded in her ears. She fancied herself flying through space—now rising, now falling—and her thoughts jumbled themselves into a hopeless tangle.

José ill? José dying? José, the strong—the all powerful? Impossible! This was some trick of Fate—a mockery; it could not mean that he had really sunk to the level of the sick!—the broken!—the stricken of God!

The driver pulled up sharply, and Meresia, waking with a start from her dream, sprang on to the pavement, and ran up the steps of Dr. Serano's house.

(To be concluded.)

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That the new serial in *The Sunday Reader*—"In Cæsar's Name"—is one of the finest stories ever written.
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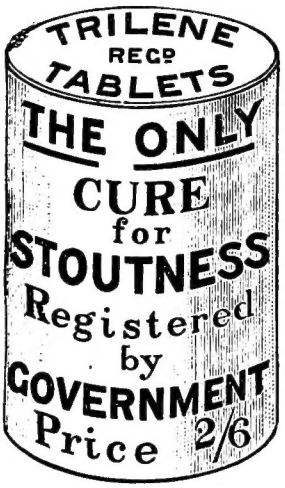

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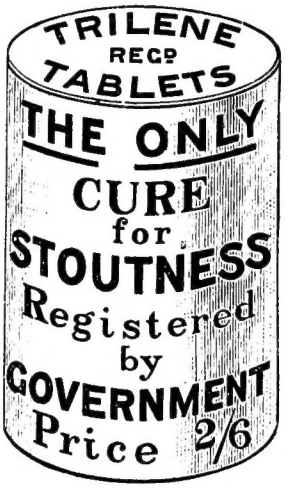

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. Canham."

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

Surgeon-Colonel E. S. Brander, M.D., writes from Ihansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

Lady Conrad writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. Boston, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. Love, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

Miss S. J. Pritchard says: "They have done me much good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.

Miss M. Flavell says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.

Mr. J. Thomas writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. Wm. Usher says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Mrs. Hutchinson, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. Billings, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

Miss Wells, Aldeburgh Hall, Saxmundham, writes: "I am pleased to say I receive great benefit from them."

Miss Duggleby, 16, New Road, Driffield, writes: "The girl who took your Tablets is reduced about 2½st."

Miss C. E. Singleton, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says: "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

Miss Macpherson, Balmugowan Lodge, Methuen, Perth, says: "I have taken one box, and am reduced 1st."

Mrs. Edmonds, Pontyguesta, Pontychin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

Marian Taylor, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2st. since taking your Tablets."

Miss Gillespie, 50, Chaucer Road, Forest Gate, Essex, says: "I have lost just 3st."

E. Nicholson, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

Countess G. Fürstenberg, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

THE new serial story of which I spoke last week begins in this number. It is without doubt the most powerful naval war story that has ever appeared in any publication. In order to stimulate interest in this, the first instalment, I offer a volume of "THE FINAL WAR" to each of the ten readers who point out by Monday, February 7th (in envelopes marked "Empress") the greatest number of discrepances between the text and the illustrations. Tell your friends about this magnificent story, "The Empress of the Earth."

THE guinea offered in the recent asterisk competition has been won by Mr. R. Plowman, 1, Walcot Square, Kennington, S.E., whose attempt was the first to hand with only two mistakes. Here is the key: 1, Aberdeen; 2, Braunton; 3, Cliffon; 4, Dalmeny; 5, Lancaster.

H. G. asks: "Which two public men have been most alike physically?" ———Probably no two men of modern times are more alike than Mr. Alma Tadema, the well-known artist, and the late Mr. George du Maurier, author of *Trilby*. These two gentlemen so exactly resembled one another that even their dearest and nearest friends were sometimes deceived.

A. C.—No, London is *not* the most cosmopolitan city in the world. This reputation is enjoyed by San Francisco, where the holidays of almost every nation are commemorated by public parades. Every civilised language may be heard, and the ships of every maritime nation, from the British man-of-war to the Maltese felucca and the Chinese junk, are seen in the bay.

MOTHER.—Children seldom shed tears before the age of three months, so there is no reason why you should be alarmed.

P. B. W. is very much in love, and would very much like to tell the object of his adoration all about it, and ask her to marry him. Just at present, however, he is unable to say exactly when he will be in a position to marry, and he wants to know whether he would be justified in proposing under the circumstances. ———There is certainly no harm in asking the lady. She can but refuse you, but if she cares for you she will not mind waiting a little. If you wait until you are able to marry before you declare your love, the possibility of losing her altogether is materially increased.

W. K.—Yorkshire has been the site of more battles than any other English county. From the years A.D. 61 to 1644 thirteen battles are recorded as having been fought on the soil of Yorkshire, and there must be several others of which no record has been kept.

E. N.—The largest of all song birds is the lyre bird of Australia. It has two voices—one a loud, shrill call, which can be heard at a great distance, and the other an inward and varied song, which can only be heard at a distance of a few yards.

M. W. wishes to communicate with the Queen, and, like the wise man I have no doubt he is, before doing so, wishes to find out the proper way to set about it.———To begin with, the paper on which letters addressed to Her Majesty are written must not be folded, for no communication which bears evidence of having been creased will ever fall into her hands. The letter should be written on thick, glossy paper, and inclosed in an envelope that fits it properly. All folded letters are opened by the Mistress of the Robes, and as a rule, the contents never get beyond her, or, if the letter is of any importance it would probably be returned to the writer with directions as to how to forward it.

R. E. G.—An excellent way to obtain a good caricature of anyone is to first of all get a likeness of the person you want to draw, on a sheet of thin india-rubber; then put this over a frame, stretching any parts you wish to exaggerate. In this way you will get an exact reproduction of your friend's face as it would be if it were manipulated in the flesh.

INVALID is anxious to know which is the healthiest place in the world to live.———Judging from the death-rates, the little French hamlet of Aumone might well lay claim to the distinction. There are forty inhabitants, of whom twenty-eight are over eighty-five years of age, and three are over a hundred, and there are no graves in the local cemetery.

B. N. wants to know how a wedding-cake came to be such an indispensable part of a marriage feast.———It is a relic of an old Roman custom. At a Roman wedding, the bride was always supposed to prepare at least a part of the feast with her own hands.

T. H. wants to know if pure water is colourless.———According to a learned professor absolutely pure water, when seen in masses of sufficient depth, is blue, and all the varieties of colour seen in lakes and streams arise from the presence in the water of mineral salts of different degrees of solubility and in varying quantities.

S. C. J.—The tallest structure, compared with the size of the builder, is the hill of Termites, or white ants. If the houses of men were proportionately built, the humblest residence would be a mile high.

WE regret to say that the tale which appeared in *Short Stories* on December 25th, and entitled "The Sermon that Never was Preached," was inserted in this paper under a misapprehension. At the time we believed that it was an original contribution, and we paid for it as such. We have since learnt that it is the property of the author, Mr. Allen Clarke (author of "The Knobstick," etc.), and we must apologise for having inserted it without his permission.

J. N.—No, mad people never realise that they are mad. The moment a madman realises that his ideas are delusions he is not really insane.

P. M. asks: "How many members is it necessary should be present in Parliament in order that a Bill may be discussed?"———In which House do you mean, the House of Commons or the House of Lords? In the former forty members must be present or all discussion of a Bill must cease, the House is counted out, and adjournment necessarily follows. On the other hand, a Bill may be considered in the House of Lords if there are only three members on the benches.

A-BRIDE-TO-BE.—The bride's veil is a relic of the "care cloth," a canopy held over the virgin bride by our Saxon forefathers to conceal her embarrassment.

PETER.—Yes, large tobacco firms are certainly coming to the front in advertising, and are showing a tremendous amount of ingenuity in the drawing-up of their notices. I should think Messrs. Ogden would probably come first in this direction. For smartness and originality of ideas they are hard to beat.

ACHING HEAD wants to know how it is that the present generation seems to suffer so much more from headache than did their ancestors.———The reason is simple enough. People depend so much more upon their brains for a living than they used, and overwork in this direction will soon bring on a headache. The consequence is that the patent drug market is flooded with different remedies, amongst the best of which may be mentioned the "Kaputine" and "Daisy" cures. Free samples of these medicines may be had by writing to Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, for the former, and Daisy Ltd., Leeds, for the latter.

POSTAL RATES.

SHORT STORIES will be sent direct from these offices, post free, to any country within the Postal Union, at the following rates, prepaid:

One Year	6s. 6d.
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Three Months	1s. 8d.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., at Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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DEER RECTORY,
MINTLAW, ABERDEEN,
Nov. 8th, 1897.

From Rev. J. H. BURN.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks' incessant neuralgia.

Thirteen years' suffering effectually and speedily relieved by KAPUTINE is the testimony of Rev. T. TAYLOR, VICAR of ST. BREDWARDS, Cornwall.

There is nothing like this wonderful KAPUTINE. Nothing Similar, Nothing as Good.

Sold by all leading Chemists, Packets of 18 Doses, 1s.

If any Difficulty, send and enclose stamped envelope to "A.M.," KAPUTINE Ltd., Huddersfield, for free samples, or 12 Stamps for a Packet of 18 doses.

KAPUTINE

THE SAFE REMEDY FOR *HEADACHE.*

EASY COMPETITION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

As a reward to those who assist in selling KAPUTINE, we will forward to each sender of the first ten letters opened Feb. 1st, 1898, with the missing letters of the Eight following words correctly filled in, descriptive of the qualities of KAPUTINE, £1 each; to the next ten 5s. each; to the next ten 2s. 6d. each.

K*PU*I*E	A**EEA*LE	P*RF*CT	U*EQ**LL*D
T*N*C	I*IM*T*BL*	NO*PO*SON**S	E**ECT*VE

As a guarantee that the competitor has assisted in selling KAPUTINE for Headache, each competitor must enclose four stamped outside wrappers of KAPUTINE packets. These four wrappers may be easily obtained if you persuade your friends or relations to let you buy one packet each for them, and you can then get the wrappers necessary. Show them our advertisement and you will have no difficulty in getting them to buy a packet of this wonderful remedy for Headache and Neuralgia, or you may get several friends to join at one packet. You have three months to win the prize in.

In addition to the above prizes we will give a prize **£10 Bank of England Note** to the person sending, on February 1st, 1898, the largest number of outside wrappers bearing part of the medicine stamp. These wrappers you may obtain as suggested above.

Address: "A.M.," Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield. *List of Winners "Yorkshire Post," February 7th, 1898.*

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During **OUR ANNUAL CLEARANCE SALE** (which is now taking place) we shall give TWO CASH PRIZES of £15 each, and THIRTY PRIZES of 20/- each. Send a Post-card for Sale Price List and full particulars without delay.

Price Lists and Patterns post free, and need not be returned

Genuine Bargains are being offered in Dress Materials, Mantlings, Suitings, Flannels, Flannelettes, Blankets, Sheets, Quilts, Underclothing, Curtains, Carpets, Towels, etc., etc.

STOCK MUST BE CLEARED.

FIRST ORDER OPENED EVERY WEDNESDAY FREE.

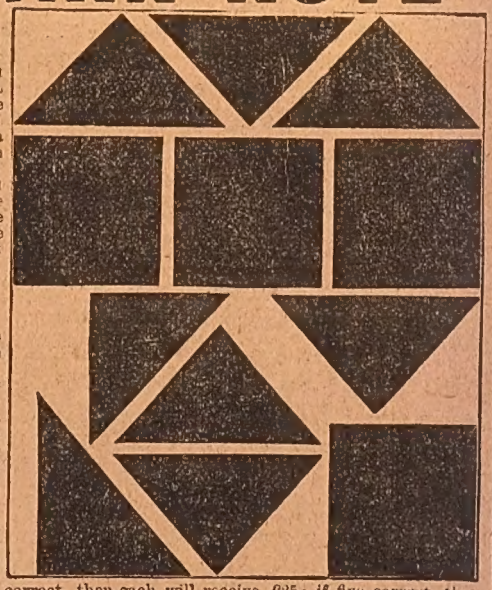
You will honestly save your 5/- in the pound by purchasing now from

LUTAS LEATHLEY & CO.,

Dept. 41, ARMLEY, LEEDS.

£50 BANK NOTE

GIVEN AWAY to purchasers of ZUILIA the new Indian perfume, solely manufactured by the ZUILIA Perfumery Co., Rosebery Avenue, London, E.C. Put up in artistic bottles packed in wool, in handsome box, 1/3; sent carriage free per return for 1/6. This new and powerful scent is a marvellous discovery, being a blend of odoriferous perfumes, from which emanates a delicious aroma, delicate and pleasing, the generous bouquet pervading the boudoir, and, in fact, the whole household. No home should be without it. With "Zuilia" Perfume we are giving free a 6d. sample box of Zuilia Dentifrice, unsurpassed for the preservation of the teeth.



A SPECIAL OFFER.

£50 will be given gratis to purchasers who succeed in placing together the twelve pieces to form a square.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Cut out the pieces and place together in such a way that the whole will form an ordinary square. When done, paste on cardboard or thick paper (in order to keep the square together), then post the same to us, with a stamped envelope addressed, enclosing P.O. or stamps value 1/6 for "Zuilia" scent.

Nota Bene.—This offer holds good for readers of this paper for the next fourteen days. Should there be more than one person succeed in forming the square, then the £50 will be divided thus: If two correct, then each will receive £25; if five correct, then each will receive £10; if ten, then each will receive £5; and so on. The task set being very difficult, it is anticipated that few will succeed in solving, thus making the remuneration very substantial.

It is Surely Worth Trying For.

THE ZUILIA PERFUMERY CO.,

13 ROSEBERY AVENUE, LONDON, E.C.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Mind, Morals and Medicine

TO AUTHORS, AND ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

"Operating on the mind by means of the body," a secret discovered, we believe, by Camus, is remarked upon by several great writers. DRYDEN, for instance, says:

"When I have a grand design I ever take physic, for when you would have pure swiftness of thought and fiery flights of fancy, you must have a care of the interior."

What amazing "fiery flights" we would have been treated to had DRYDEN been lucky enough to have plied his pen in the days of such an approved medicine as BEECHAM'S PILLS, readers will hardly be able to imagine! LORD BYRON is also lucid when he says:

"The thing that gives me the highest spirits (it seems absurd, but true) is a dose of salts; but one can't take them like champagne."

Surely after this we shall be pardoned for exclaiming, "How BYRON would positively have revelled in his box of BEECHAM'S PILLS!" Other old-time philosophers evidently sailed in the same boat, for we read that

"CARNEADES was accustomed to take copious doses of a GREAT APERIENT as a preparation to refute certain dogmas."

Well, we are certainly bold enough to suggest that, had CARNEADES existed later, his "GREAT APERIENT" would have been none other than BEECHAM'S PILLS, for what medicine has proved itself so eminently worthy of the title? The elder DISRAELI also speaks out on the subject:

"If the mind be disordered, we may often look for its seat in some corporeal derangement. Often are our thoughts disturbed by a strange irritability called the 'fidgets,' a disorder to which the ladies are particularly liable."

DISRAELI was quite right. But with the advent to the world of such known fidget-dispellers as BEECHAM'S PILLS matters have much changed. "Fidgets" notwithstanding are allowed to be all too prevalent to-day, and with both sexes. Perhaps the most innocent kind of fidgets is that peculiar feeling which suddenly seizes some people on discovering they are minus their BEECHAM PILL box, a feeling which of course disappears just as rapidly on the pills' reappearance, for BEECHAM'S PILLS are wonderfully trusty companions. But DISRAELI continues:

"Sometimes our dreams present us with images of our restlessness, till we recollect that the seat of our brain may perhaps lie in our stomach, and that the most artificial logic to make us reasonable may be simply a pill."

DISRAELI again hits the nail on the head. And that this knack of "making us reasonable" in cases of nightmare and lively dreams belongs to BEECHAM'S PILLS, we think goes without saying. Finally, with such practical evidence before us, we feel we must agree with BAYES when he says:

"That for a sonnet to AMANDA, and the like, stewed prunes only might be sufficient, but, for a grand design, nothing less than a more formal and formidable dose."

But BAYES doesn't say of what. We most decidedly say a dose of

BEECHAM'S PILLS

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